



## Defiant Saddam tests U.S. resolve in a bid to smash U.N. embargo

DUBAI (AFP) — President Saddam Hussein has revitalised Iraq's campaign to win a lifting of economic sanctions but his defiance over U.N. arms inspections could still backfire and spark U.S. military retaliation.

And with the sanctions left firmly in place despite a rift in the U.N. Security Council, Iraq has had to resign itself to at least another six months of the "oil-for-food" deal, a humanitarian exemption to the embargo.

At the height of the inspections crisis in November, Baghdad backed down and allowed the return of U.S. weapons experts working for the United Nations while Washington mobilised its forces but failed to win support for military action.

President Hussein raised the stakes with his decision to expel U.S. inspectors in an effort to put the international spotlight on the crippling U.N. embargo, which has been in force since Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

But the U.S. has switched the focus back to Iraq's suspected weapons sites, notably over Baghdad's insistence on keeping U.N. arms experts out of its presidential palaces.

Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, stressing that the palaces had not previously been an issue, has accused Washington of fabricating a new crisis as a pretext to launch a military strike.

Experts are divided on what President Hussein achieved in 1997, apart from hogging the limelight for several weeks.

"It was a terrible year for Iraq but a very good one for Saddam's regime," said

Hazhir Teimourian, a London-based Middle East expert.

"The latest escapade with UNSCOM was a major Arab nationalist victory for him," he said, referring to the crisis with the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of dismantling Iraq.

With the support of Russia, Iraq has secured changes to the Special Commission designed to speed up its work.

And when UNSCOM chief Richard Butler makes his next visit to Iraq on Jan. 19, Aziz has said international experts will help launch technical reviews to assess progress in eliminating Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction.

The U.N. sanctions cannot be lifted until UNSCOM certifies that it has stripped Iraq of the potential to build such arms.

"What he [President Hussein] has done is to postpone the eventual lifting of sanctions but made himself more popular. He has also made it clear that he hasn't learnt any lesson from the [1991] Gulf war" over Kuwait, said Mr. Teimourian.

"He is still thinking he can tangle with the only superpower without paying the price," he said. "Everybody is being short-sighted at the moment but the prospects are that we might well have another crisis."

But Rosemary Hollis, director of the Middle East programme at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, said Iraq has cashed in on Arab resentment of U.S. policy, notably over the deadlocked peace process with Israel.

## Iraq stresses it will block U.N. inspectors

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq will not allow U.N. arms monitors into President Saddam Hussein's palaces despite a call by the Security Council to open such sites to inspection, the newspaper of the ruling Baath Party said Wednesday.

The daily Al Thawra, often used to express the government's views, said the U.N. Security Council had no right to ask Iraq to permit inspections of these sites, terming the council's demand for such inspections totally unacceptable.

The commentary came two days after the Security Council criticised Iraq for making the presidential palaces off limits, saying the government's refusal to give unconditional access was "unacceptable and a clear violation" of U.N. resolutions.

The Security Council adopted the criticism in a statement — which is non-binding — after the U.S. failed to get stronger language saying the council "condemns" Iraq for blocking access to the sites.

Al Thawra said opening President Hussein's palaces for inspection would compromise Iraq's "sovereignty and dignity" as a state.

It also said that the U.N. weapons inspectors were "spies working for the U.S." and that Iraq will never allow them to "relish the violation" of presidential palaces.

The arms inspectors have the job of certifying that Iraq has eliminated its weapons of mass destruction in line with U.N. resolutions adopted after the Iraqi invasion of neighbouring Kuwait in 1990.

The resolutions impose sanctions on Iraq that include a ban on the export of its oil, the country's most valuable resource.

"I believe we've had a turning-point with this latest crisis," she said.

"The light at the end of tunnel for Saddam Hussein has become closer," she said, referring to a possible end of the sanctions.

"The American approach, that all you have to do is threaten Iraq, can no longer be used undiluted. They have to use inducement as well as punishment," Ms. Hollis said.

"The U.S. moment of glory in the Middle East is over and criticism in the Arab World, notably from

friendly countries, has increased," she said, pointing to Gulf Arab opposition to military action against Iraq.

But U.S. national security advisor Sandy Berger has warned that "no options are off the table" if President Hussein does not grant access to his palaces.

The American military deployment in the Gulf region comprises some 30,000 troops, 350 fighter planes, two aircraft carriers and many warships, some of them equipped with cruise missiles.



SANTA IN DAMASCUS: A man dressed as Santa Claus presents gifts to Muslim schoolgirls at a shopping centre in the Christian sector of Damascus Wednesday, as Syrians prepared to celebrate Christmas. Muslims usually visit the Christian sector and buy toys on this occasion (Reuters photo)

## U.S. denies report linking Iran to Luxor massacre

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The State Department denied Wednesday a newspaper report claiming that the new U.S. ambassador to Israel had told Israeli officials that Iran was involved in the massacre of tourists in Egypt last month.

The story is not accurate, a State Department official said.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Ambassador Ned Walker told Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy that the Iranian embassy in Damascus was involved in planning the Nov. 17 attack near the southern Egyptian city of Luxor.

The attack by Islamist militants left more than 50 foreign tourists dead.

The official, who asked not to be named, said any questions concerning the investigation of the Luxor massacre were to be answered by the Egyptian government, which is conducting the probe.

Mr. Walker was to present his credentials to Israeli President Ezer Weizman Wednesday.

## Netanyahu: Israel is the most amazing success of the century

TEL AVIV (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu asserted Tuesday that for all its problems, the state of Israel is the most amazing success story of this century.

"There is much to rejoice over," Mr. Netanyahu told Channel 2 TV after the nation launched a yearlong commemoration of its 50th anniversary with a lighting of the first candle of Hanukkah at President Ezer Weizman's residence.

Mr. Netanyahu presented Israel's case in the face of deepening national malaise under his stewardship — with the peace process in trouble and the country seemingly more divided than ever into rival political camps and ethnic groups.

In only five decades since the Jews were "like a leaf in the wind, unable to protect themselves," Israel has built one of the world's strongest militaries, he said.

In addition, the Jewish state is a world leader in agriculture and hi-tech and enjoys a Western standard of living, Mr. Netanyahu noted.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### 59 slain in new Algeria massacres

ALGIERS (AFP) — Islamists massacred 59 civilians overnight Tuesday in attacks on two villages in the Taret region in southwest Algeria and in a forest near the capital, security forces said. Forty-eight of the villagers were killed in Sidi Landri and M'ghila in Taret, 250 kilometres southwest of Algiers, and 11 were killed in Bainem, a forest bordering on the capital, the security services said in a statement. The Algerian army in recent weeks has carried out an intense sweep of the Bainem area directed at Islamist guerrillas. The statement said the latest victims included several children. The two massacres came as attacks and killings blamed on armed Islamists increased with less than a week to the Islamic holy fasting month Ramadan. Fears have been growing in Algeria of an upsurge in bomb attacks and massacres in the run-up to the Dec. 31 start of Ramadan, which in years past has occasioned violent flare-ups.

#### Security Council welcomes accord on Somali factions

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The United Nations Security Council on Tuesday welcomed an accord between warring Somali factions that promises to put an end to six years of civil war. The main Somali factions signed the agreement Monday at the Egyptian foreign ministry in Cairo, bringing a halt to the fighting, and creating a provi-

sional federal state with a central government. The 15 members of the Security Council applauded that accord. "The Security Council reaffirms its commitment to a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the crisis in Somalia," the U.N. body said in a statement. The Security Council further urged "all Somali leaders to contribute positively to the current momentum for peace and reconciliation." The accord is to be approved at a national conference in Baidoa, Somalia on Feb. 15, which will bring together designated representatives from nearly 500 clans.

#### Greece to expel Turkish consular official

ATHENS (AP) — Greece said on Tuesday it will expel a Turkish consular official in reprisal for Ankara's expulsion of a Greek diplomat accused of spying. Government spokesman Dimitris Reppas said the diplomat, identified as Nedim Ezergin, serves at the Turkish consulate in the northern port city of Salonica. The consulate is located next to the house where Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern secular Turkey, was born. Mr. Reppas said the expulsion was "in reprisal" for Turkey's decision to send home Ekstratos Haralambous, an administrative officer at the Greek consulate in Istanbul. Greece has denied Mr. Haralambous was a spy and said Ankara had presented no proof for its allegations. Both expulsions are sure to prove a setback to international efforts to improve the tense relations between the two neighbouring NATO allies, which have twice come to the

brink of war in the past decade over disputes in the Aegean Sea.

#### Chinese FM in Egypt on final leg of Mideast tour

CAIRO (AFP) — Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen arrived here on Wednesday on the final stop of a Middle East tour which has already taken him to Israel, the Palestinian territories, Syria and Lebanon. Mr. Qian is expected to spend three days in the Egyptian capital and hold talks with President Hosni Mubarak during his stay. The Chinese diplomat was met at the airport by his Egyptian counterpart Amr Moussa and the two headed directly to the foreign ministry for talks, officials said. Bilateral relations and the deadlocked Middle East peace process are expected to top the agenda.

#### Two die in Turkish mine collapse

ANKARA (AFP) — An engineer and a worker were found dead Wednesday morning following a landslide in a mine near Bolu, 200 kilometres west of Istanbul, local authorities said. The collapse took place Tuesday when approximately 100 workers were in the mine, trapping five people. One person was rescued, and relief workers were still searching for the other two miners. The causes of the incident remained unknown. A firebomb explosion had killed eight people in the same mine in 1993.

#### JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

#### PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes  
13:10 Snow White  
14:00 Big Brother Jake  
15:00 To Grandmother's House We Go  
16:30 Mr. Bean  
17:00 French Programmes  
19:00 Le Journal  
19:15 French Programmes  
19:30 News Headlines  
19:35 Home For the New Year  
21:10 Musical drama — The Sleeping Beauty  
22:00 News in English  
22:30 The Great Music Awards '97

Friday Programmes  
14:10 The Adventures of Teddy Ruxpin  
14:30 The New Fred and Barney Show  
15:00 Wishbone  
15:30 Lucky Luke  
16:00 Family Matters  
16:20 Doc — Natural Wonders of Europe  
17:00 French Programmes  
19:30 News Headlines  
19:35 Doc — Life on the Internet  
20:00 Comedy — Are You Being Served?  
20:30 Brisco County  
21:10 Doc — Horizon  
22:00 News in English  
22:30 Feature film — "Boom Town"

#### PRAYER TIMES

05:06 Fajr

### JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

06:29 (Sunrise) Duha

11:36 Dhuhur

14:20 Asr

16:42 Maghreb

18:05 Isha

#### CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

Swetfieh, Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 623366

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Armenian International Church Tel. 865897

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

#### WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology  
Skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers. Winds will be variable occasionally becoming southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman ..... 07/14

Aqaba ..... 10/22

Deserts ..... 04/16

Jordan Valley ..... 10/21

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 14, Aqaba 21 Humidity readings: Amman 67 per cent, Aqaba 40 per cent.

#### USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

#### NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Khalil Al Tustiq ..... 757253

Dr. Naser Ibrahim ..... 830432

Dr. Wafiq Qaddam ..... 893542

Dr. Bahjat Bader ..... 832642

Firas pharmacy ..... 661912

Ferdows pharmacy ..... 778336

Al Asema pharmacy ..... 637055

Nadroukh pharmacy ..... 623672

Al Salam pharmacy ..... 636730

Yacoub pharmacy ..... 644945

Shmeisani pharmacy ..... 637660

Najib pharmacy ..... 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ghazi Ta'anneh ..... 250880

Al Quds pharmacy ..... (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Tareq Hijawi ..... 985445

Khalifeh pharmacy ..... 985417

#### EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre ..... 637111

Blood Bank ..... 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue ..... 630341

Civil Defence Emergency ..... 199

Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade ..... 617101

Blood Bank ..... 775121

Highway Police ..... 843402

Traffic Police ..... 896390

Public Security Department ..... 630321

Hotel Complaints ..... 605800

Price Complaints ..... 661176

Water and Sewerage Complaints ..... 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints ..... 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) ..... 121

Overseas Calls ..... 010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs ..... 623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs ..... 661101

Jordan Television ..... 773111

Radio Jordan ..... 774111

Water Authority ..... 680100

Jordan Electricity Authority

Electric Power Company ..... 636381

RJ Flight Information (RJ) 53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport (RJ) 53200

#### HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre ..... 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity ..... 642816

Akileh Maternity ..... 642411/2

Jabal Amman Maternity ..... 642362

Mallus, J. Amman ..... 636140

Palestine, Shmeisani (60707) ..... 669131

Shmeisani Hospital ..... 845845

University Hospital ..... 667227/1

Al-Muasher Hospital ..... 667227/1

The Islamic, Abdali (664120/37) ..... 664164/6

Al-Ahli, Abdali ..... 775111/26

Italian, Al-Muhajreen ..... 777101/3

Al-Bashir ..... 891611/15

Army, Marka ..... 602340/50

Queen Alia Hospital ..... 674155

Anal Hospital ..... 865199

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery ..... 865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital ..... 09983323

Zarqa National Hospital ..... 09980564

Ibn Sina Hospital (09986732) ..... 09986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital ..... 09980980

IRBID:

Princess Rasmia Hospital ..... 021275555

Greek Catholic Hospital ..... 021272275

Ibn Al Nafies Hospital ..... 021247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital ..... 033314111

#### FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified.

Information on other flights are supplied on phone 44 (52700) or 44 (53250).

#### ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights:

06:25 ..... Bombay (RJ)

09:00 ..... Samsa (RJ)

09:15 ..... Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)

09:30 ..... New Delhi (RJ)

10:05 ..... Muscat, Dubai (RJ)

10:15 ..... Doha, Bahrain (RJ)

10:40 ..... Colombo (RJ)

15:00 ..... New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

17:55 ..... London, Vienna (RJ)

18:05 ..... Athens (RJ)

18:05 ..... Kuwait (RJ)

18:55 ..... Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)

19:20 ..... Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)

21:00 ..... Kuala Lumpur (add) (RJ)

21:00 ..... Moscow (RJ)

22:15 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)

22:50 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)

04:00 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)

04:45 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)

#### Other Flights

13:15 ..... Riyadh (SV)

14:10 ..... Sharjah (AH)

15:00 ..... Doha (QR)

15:20 ..... Muscat, Dubai (GF)

16:30 ..... Rome (AZ)

20:00 ..... Tel Aviv (MS)





Primary students in the Art Department at the Modern English School exhibit a display combining elements of both Christmas and Ramadan, the beginning of which is expected soon after Christmas this year (Photo by Rana Hussein)

## Christmas 1997 — Kingdom's Christian leaders express hope for peace in region

AMMAN (Petra) — Christians in Jordan today celebrate Christmas with ceremonies in churches in different parts of the country. Heads of Christian communities interviewed by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, noted that celebrations this year come close to the end of the second millennium of the birth of Christ and expressed hope that peace will be established in the Middle East and the world at large.

The head of the Roman Catholic community in Jordan, Bishop Salim Sayegh, said while the world celebrates the anniversary of the birth of

Christ, who came for peace, the world is full of problems such as unemployment, disease, and famine, as well as war, injustice, and ignorance. Roman Catholic priests in Safout and Jabal Amman, as well as the head of the Greek Catholic Church, Bishop George Al

Murr, and the head of the Armenian Orthodox Church, Bishop Vahan Topalian, all voiced their hope for peace to prevail in the Middle East. They also praised the national Christian-Muslim community in Jordan under the Hashemite Royal Family.

## Scientific society, environmental agency sign water quality agreement

AMMAN (Petra) — The Environmental Protection Corporation and the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) Wednesday signed a one-year agreement under which the RSS will ensure water quality.

For this purpose, the RSS is bound by the provisions of the agreement to draw samples of drinking water from surface and ground water sources, as well as treated water in several locations, including in the Gulf of Aqaba near the hotels and near the Jordanian-Saudi border. The samples will be sent to RSS laboratories, which will inform the concerned

municipalities of the test results. The agreement commits the corporation to facilitate the mission of the RSS teams and to ensure that necessary permits are made available to enable them to enter the areas where water samples will be drawn.

The agreement was signed by RSS President Said Aloush and Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Tawfiq Kreishan on behalf of the corporation.

The JD120,000 agreement is effective as of Wednesday. Another agreement was concluded Wednesday

between the University of Jordan Centre for Water and Environmental Research and Studies and the RSS, under which the university will conduct a study on the negative environmental consequences on soil resulting from improper agricultural practices.

The study is aimed at assessing agricultural patterns in the Kingdom. The study will come up with a set of practical guidelines on the use of proper agricultural methods to prevent negative consequences on the soil and to utilise new methods to combat desertification in the areas covered by the study.

## Royal Wings to increase number of regional flights

AMMAN (J.T.) — Royal Wings, a subsidiary of Royal Jordanian (RJ), the national air carrier, will buy another Bombardier Dash 50-seat plane from Canada to boost its operations and increase its flights, mainly to Near East destinations, Royal Wings Director General Ahd Qantar announced Wednesday.

With the purchase of the plane, which is due to arrive in Amman by mid-January, Royal Wings will have three such planes needed for its short and medium-range flights in the region, he noted.

Mr. Qantar said the third plane will enable Royal Wings to organise daily flights to Sharm Al Sheikh resort in the Sinai and the Egyptian city of Ghardaqa on the Red Sea. The current semi-weekly flights to Al 'Arish in the Sinai and Larnaca in Cyprus will increase to three and four per week, respectively, in conjunction with RJ, he added.

Royal Wings will also be able to organise chartered flights between Amman and Rhodes, Antalya, Turkey, Alexandria, and other destinations starting next March, he said.

The airline, which commenced operations in March 1996, also plans to increase the number of daily flights between Amman and Aqaba from the current two to three starting next month.

Royal Wings operates three weekly flights between Amman and Tel Aviv, but according to Mr. Qantar, negotiations are under way with the Israeli authorities to increase the flights to eight per week.

## Mulki names Mafrag free trade zone as one of ministry's priorities

MAFRAQ (Petra) — Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Hani Mulki announced here Wednesday that the creation of a free trade zone in Mafrag is among his ministry's coming priority projects.

At a ceremony held in the city to honour former members of Mafrag's chambers of industry and trade, Dr. Mulki said Mafrag governorate's 49 industrial companies, with a total capital of JD15 million, and 107 trading companies will be boosted with the creation of the zone.

The site of the free trade

zone will be set up on 3,300 dunums of land in the Zaatar district within the governorate of Mafrag, according to the minister.

Dr. Mulki said Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali has instructed him to establish the zone during 1998.

The infrastructure services needed to boost the economic activities in and attract investors to the free trade zone will begin shortly in the governorate, he said.

The government, Dr. Mulki stated, is seeking to apply the decentralisation

system, adding that the 1998 fiscal budget made provisions for each governorate in Jordan to have its own budget in line with this policy.

The government will encourage investment in the Mafrag governorate by providing incentives to investors whose projects can help reduce unemployment, he added.

Furthermore, the ministry plans to open a trade registration office in Mafrag by the start of the new year to serve as a liaison between businesses here and the Ministry of

Industry and Trade in Amman.

Dr. Mulki earlier visited Al al Bayt University, where he met with the university president, Mohammad Bakhit, and opened a branch of the Civil Service Consumer Corporation on the campus for the benefit of the 4,200 students, their teachers, and the university staff.

The corporation, which was created by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, aims to provide civil servants with various consumer goods at competitive prices.

## Jordan-EU association agreement will hurt small companies — Khalaf

LONDON (Petra) — Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf has said small Jordanian companies are bound to be adversely affected by the application of the Jordanian-European association agreement signed with the European Union (EU) last month.

"Some small Jordanian factories are expected to close as a result of this association agreement, but the national economy at large will benefit because large industrial businesses will be set up to make up for any losses," the minister said in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Arabic service.

Jordan expects to see a large amount of European investment in the country as a result of the agreement since it allows a larger

share of Jordanian agricultural and other products to be marketed in Europe than at present, she said.

According to the agreement, Jordan and the EU will begin negotiations within four years on the necessary measures for exporting more Jordanian agricultural products to European markets.

"We will start negotiations by the year 2002 and the steps to be agreed on will be applied in the following year," she noted.

Jordan is the third Arab country, after Morocco and Tunisia, to conclude an association agreement with Europe designed to gradually lift all trade barriers between the two sides.

Despite the fact that the majority of Jordanians are convinced of the benefits and advantages that the

association agreement will have for the Kingdom, some members of Jordan's chambers of industry and trade have expressed fears over the possible negative impacts, said the minister.

However, according to the agreement, ample time will be given to Jordanian businesses to adapt to the new arrangement, and trade will be gradually liberalised, she noted.

"We will liberalise input gradually and also reduce customs duties gradually at the rate of 20 per cent annually. At a later stage, we will liberalise consumer goods by reducing customs duties on them at the rate of 10 per cent annually so that we will have completely free trade between Jordan and Europe in 12 years," according to Dr. Khalaf.

When asked about the reason behind the absence of an Arab economic bloc, she said Jordan has exerted all possible efforts towards creating such an entity or a common market.

Jordan, she added, has been one of the few Arab states receptive to the idea of an Arab common market, which has never come into being, and the Kingdom is still calling for the creation of a free trade zone within the Arab World.

She stated that the absence of an Arab economic bloc was due to the fact that different Arab countries have adopted different economic systems and some are not interested in opening up trade to other Arab countries, while others do not have a free market economy.



MUTAWI MEETS WITH EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR: Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi and Egyptian Ambassador to Jordan Hani Riyadh Suleiman Wednesday discuss scopes of bilateral relations in the information field and prospects of conducting joint media training courses. Mr. Suleiman briefed Dr. Mutawi on measures taken by the Egyptian government to ensure the safety of tourists in Egypt. He voiced hope that the media apparatus in both countries could work out a mechanism for cooperation to highlight the measures taken by the Egyptian government to ensure the safety and comfort of tourists (Petra photo)

## Fahd Ballan, popular singer, dies at 64

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Syrian singer Fahd Ballan Tuesday passed away in his hometown of Suwaida at the age of 64, according to Jordan Television.

Ballan, a famous Arab singer, contributed to the art of singing in the Arab World. Ballan, who sang for 40 years, was admitted to Suwaida Hospital Monday night suffering from a brain haemorrhage, but passed away Tuesday morning, according to a report in the Arabic daily Al Rai.

Fahd Ballan sang more than 500 songs and took part in 12 films, where he performed with Arab stars including Dureid Lahham, Nuhd Qulai, Abdul Salam Al Nabulsi, and Mariam Fakhraddin, whom he married for a short while. Sabah, Najah Salam, Samira Tawfiq, and



Taroub. The late Mr. Ballan sang for the most famous musicians, including Farid Al Atrash, Baligh Hamdi, Sayyed Mikkawi, Felmone Wahbe, Abdul Fat-

tah Sukkar, and Suhail Arafat. With the passing of Fahd Ballan, the Arab World has lost one of its famous singers, whose songs have a special flavour.

## WHAT'S GOING ON

### FILM

\* German film "Die Dame und die Unterwelt" (Women and the World of Crime) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman on Saturday at 4:30 p.m.

### EXHIBITIONS

\* Display of Bani Hamida handicrafts (rugs, cushions, and wall hangings) at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman (Tel. 658696/7), until Jan. 5.

\* "Modern Bulgarian Art" at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Jan. 5.

5537598), until Jan. 5.

\* Works by about a hundred artists from Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan at Hamourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 20 (Tel. 5536098).

\* Exhibition of prints by Algerian artist Rashid Koraishi and calligraphy by Iraqi artist Hassan Massoudi, inspired by the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 31. Also displaying paintings by Jordanian artist Nasr Abdul Aziz, and works by contemporary Arab artists.

## Yeltsin over his illness — official

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin is over his heavy cold and will not return to a Moscow clinic which has been treating him when he finishes work at the Kremlin Wednesday, a senior aide said.

Mr. Yeltsin will spend the night at his official residence in Gorky-9 just outside of Moscow, said presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky, cited by ITAR-TASS news agency.

Mr. Yeltsin has spent the last two weeks at the Barvikha clinic west of Moscow where he was admitted Dec. 10 suffering from a chill and an acute chest infection.

He returned to the clinic Tuesday after working for three hours at his Kremlin desk, his first visit to the seat of Russian power since falling ill.

Mr. Yeltsin resumed work under a compromise deal with his doctors, who had wanted the Russian leader to extend his recuperation at Barvikha until the end of the week.

Officials have indicated that the president will take a two-week break shortly in order to help prepare him for a full-time return to work, although precise details have not been released.

During talks at the Kremlin Wednesday Mr. Yeltsin told leading cabinet reformer Boris Nemtsov he would not tolerate failure to pay off \$4.4 billion in state sector wage arrears by a

Jan. 1 deadline.

"We must meet (the deadline) and not push it back," ITAR-TASS quoted him as saying. "We are bound by the undertaking we gave together" he told the young first deputy prime minister.

The cash-strapped government has recently said it will pay off its share of the backlog, but said Russia's regions are responsible for fulfilling the rest of the

quota.

However, Mr. Yeltsin signalled he would not accept such distinctions, saying: "One must not distinguish between the undertakings of the federal and regional authorities."

Mr. Yeltsin, 66, whose health has been the focus of constant surveillance since he underwent marathon heart bypass surgery in November 1996, has been

itching to return to work following his two-week lay-off, defying medical advice to rest longer in order to complete his recovery.

Last Thursday he said he would return to the Kremlin within 24 hours, only to be contradicted by aides hours later.

The following day, doctors appeared to have won the battle to prolong Mr. Yeltsin's confinement, but Mr. Yastrzhembsky said the president's "burning desire" to return to work had finally forced his advisors' hands.

Mr. Yeltsin was admitted to the Barvikha clinic following an official visit to Sweden where the president had appeared visibly tired. Aides were forced to explain away a series of public gaffes by Mr. Yeltsin which raised questions about his fitness.

Speculation has been rife that the president was in fact seriously ill, one usually well-informed radio saying Mr. Yeltsin had suffered a brain spasm, a potentially serious incident.

Presidential aides dismissed the claim, but the Kremlin has suffered from a credibility problem since describing Mr. Yeltsin's eve of reelection heart attack in July 1996 as a "cold."

The Moscow stock exchange fell heavily when Mr. Yeltsin's latest illness was announced, foreign investors seeing the president as the guarantor of Russia's drive towards a market economy.

### Chubais 'could resign'

MOSCOW (AFP) — Key cabinet reformer Anatoly Chubais, severely damaged by a recent graft scandal, told the Izvestia newspaper Wednesday that he could quit the Russian government soon.

"I think that (a decision on whether to resign) is not far off," he told the newspaper, which is owned by millionaire businessman Vladimir Potanin, a close friend of Mr. Chubais.

The first deputy prime minister lost his finance ministry portfolio in November after becoming embroiled in a \$450,000 scandal over royalties for a book on Russia's privatisation programme which cost three of his co-authors their senior government posts.

President Boris Yeltsin decided to keep Mr. Chubais on because of his good contacts with international financial institutions, saying he saw no suitable candidates to replace him.

Critics, including Boris Berezovsky — a billionaire businessman ousted from Russia's security council in a coup orchestrated by Mr. Chubais and other reformers — said the cash was a thinly-veiled bribe.

Mr. Berezovsky fell out with Mr. Chubais over the privatisation of telecoms giant Syazinvest, which went to a consortium led by Potanin's Oleximbank.

Mr. Chubais said a number of leading Russian businessmen who financed Mr. Yeltsin's successful re-election campaign last year, including Mr. Berezovsky, felt "the authorities have a debt towards them."

"I will not stay in the government the moment it becomes the servant of the business world," Mr. Chubais said.

The 42-year-old architect of Russia's market reform programme is seen by foreign investors as a guarantee of Russia's commitment to economic reforms.

## No evidence of human-to-human spread of 'bird flu' — WHO

HONG KONG (AFP) — The World Health Organisation said it had found no evidence of human-to-human spread of the deadly "bird flu" which is believed to have claimed four lives in Hong Kong and has sparked a ban on all chicken imports from China.

The WHO in a statement from Geneva late Tuesday said the H5N1 influenza strain, dubbed "bird flu" because it previously only affected poultry, showed no sign of human-to-human transmission.

The statement came hours after the virus was believed to have claimed a fourth victim in Hong Kong, following three confirmed deaths since May including a 13-year-old girl who died Sunday from "multiple organ function failure."

The latest victim, a 60-year-old woman, was listed as having had a "suspected" case of H5N1, a government spokesman said.

"The cause of death is pneumonia, it is not yet confirmed at this stage whether she suffered from influenza A H5N1 infection," the spokesman said.

There have been nine confirmed and three suspected cases of H5N1, including the 60-year-old woman.

The WHO statement predicted that more cases of the virus would be detected in the territory as a result of "enhanced surveillance

activities now in progress."

Dr. Daniel Lavanchy, a WHO specialist on influenza who visited Hong Kong, said: "The cluster of cases which has been observed within a family does appear to have a common source and we are working to identify that."

"The cases so far isolated come from all parts of Hong Kong and there is still no definite sign of human-to-human transmission," the statement said.

The WHO said there was no need to impose travel restrictions or quarantine measures on Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan have warned people to be wary of the virus while travelling to Hong Kong.

Research to produce a seed virus for a potential vaccine was under way, the WHO noted, but it said that because the virus "transmits poorly" a vaccine was not immediately necessary.

Hong Kong officials however were taking no chances and announced a temporary ban on all chickens imported from China, beginning Wednesday.

Experts have found traces of the virus in chicken droppings in the territory.

The South China Morning Post in an editorial Wednesday welcomed the ban.

"It is important for public morale to demonstrate that every possible precaution is being taken to track down the source of the virus and

stop it from spreading," the paper said.

Deputy Director of Health Dr. Paul Saw, who heads a committee on the virus, announced the ban and said evidence so far suggested exposure to chicken or their faeces was a possible source of infection.

Dr. Saw confirmed the WHO findings that human-to-human transmission still needed to be determined, the government spokesman said.

Leslie Sims, senior veterinary officer of the Agriculture and Fisheries Department, said the ban on chicken imports was a precautionary measure.

"Each shipment of imported birds will be screened for evidence of flu A infection, using a rapid blood test," Mr. Sims said. "Any shipments that test positive will not be allowed to be sold until further testing can be done to assess the birds."

Inspections for H5N1 contamination would be carried out on all chicken farms in Hong Kong by the first week of January and could result in the extermination of the entire poultry stock.

"They will only be allowed to go into business when they are found to be clean," said Dr. Saw, as chicken farmers claimed their business had dropped 80 per cent following the scare.

## Bushfire authorities may ban Christmas barbecues

SYDNEY (AFP) — Plans for traditional Australian Christmas barbecues may have to be cancelled, authorities warned Wednesday, as weather conditions threatened further bushfires.

After the deadly blazes that ravaged suburbs this month, even suburban backyards may become flame-free zones in an effort to prevent another outbreak.

"If the forecast is for high temperatures, high winds and low humidity, it is likely that a fire ban will have to be declared," said Victoria state's Country Fire Authority spokesman Trevor Roche.

"Victoria is in the potentially most dangerous bushfire season since the Ash Wednesday summer (1982-83) so we all must take every precaution," he said.

"We've already had warnings with the dozens of fires that have broken out in the last few weeks," he said.

In Western Australia state, where two firefighters were killed last week, workers built firebreaks around vast tracts of scorched bushland around Perth in preparation for a return to heatwave conditions on Boxing Day.

In the south of the state, several fires still burned uncontained but posed no immediate threat, a Department of Conservation and Land Management spokesman said.

Fires across New South Wales state were mostly under control Wednesday but firefighters remained on full alert amid the scorching weather, with worse expected for the Christmas break.

About 900 firefighters, 22 helicopters and three fixed-wing aircraft were working to douse the 30 bushfires.

The temperatures expected today are still fairly favourable for firefighters compared with weather conditions we have experienced lately," Rural Fire Service spokeswoman Gilly Paxton said.



Russian President Boris Yeltsin speaks with First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov during their meeting Dec. 24. Mr. Yeltsin left a sanatorium outside Moscow Wednesday after completing his recovery from a cold and viral infection, the Kremlin said (Reuters photo)

## Anti-Taleban forces gain ground northeast of Kabul

KABUL (AFP) — Forces loyal to ousted Afghan government commander Ahmad Shah Masood have made key territorial gains from the Taleban militia northeast of Kabul, independent sources told AFP Wednesday.

Following two days of heavy fighting in the Tagab valley, Western sources said Mr. Masood's forces had grabbed the districts of Koh-i-Safi and Najrab, around 40 kilometres northeast of the capital.

"Masood attacked Tuesday and moved south towards Sarobi, apparently taking the Taleban by surprise but also bringing heavy casualties on both sides," an aid source reported.

Mr. Masood's gains threaten the strategic town of Sarobi, 70 kilometres east of Kabul on the main highway to Pakistan and the site of a hydroelectric station supplying power to

Kabul.

The sources said fighting continued Wednesday, with ex-Soviet jets operated by the hardline Islamic Taleban also undertaking retaliatory strikes on Mr. Masood's positions north of Kabul.

They added that the Taleban were Wednesday despatching reinforcements to the area, but added that they still maintained firm control of defensive hilltops and villages to the north of Sarobi reservoir.

Despite gaining key ground, military analysts consider Mr. Masood's attack to be yet another "chequebook offensive" involving the buying of loyalty from at least one local commander.

"Masood's attack quite literally employed the use of local forces, who could very easily switch sides again back to the Taleban if the price is right," a military source here commented.

Since losing Kabul to the Taleban in September 1996 and battling their forces north of Kabul since, Najrab and Koh-i-Safi districts have changed hands between Mr. Masood and the militia at least six times.

Frontlines north of the Afghan capital, where Mr. Masood is holding positions a mere 25 kilometres from the war-shattered city centre, were reported peaceful Wednesday.

Mr. Masood is a member of the northern-based anti-Taleban alliance, a loose coalition of the ex-Kabul government, ex-Communist and ethnic-Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam and the Shiite Muslim faction Hezb-i-Wahdat.

The Taleban control around two-thirds of Afghanistan, and have vowed to impose the world's purist Islamic state on a country gripped by 18 years of civil war.

## Afghan Taleban take tough line as opponent meets Pakistani leaders

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — The Afghan Taleban militia Wednesday asked opponents to give up their fight and accept its government to pave way for peace talks, as former President Burhanuddin Rabbani held talks in Pakistan.

"We are ready for talks provide they (opposition) forsake arms and accept our Islamic government," a senior Taleban official, Wakil Ahmed said, told AFP by telephone from Kandahar in southwest Afghanistan.

He suggested religious scholars from both sides should assemble to resolve differences on the basis of Islamic law.

The spokesman said the Taleban had not received any proposal for a meeting with Mr. Rabbani during his visit to Pakistan at the invitation of Prime

Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Mr. Rabbani arrived in Pakistan Tuesday from Mazar-i-Sharif in northern Afghanistan, accompanied by a delegation including representatives of component factions of the anti-Taleban alliance.

He said on arrival there could be no military solution to the Afghan conflict and called for negotiations between the warring sides with the help of Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Rabbani said the Taleban government in Kabul lacked legitimacy.

The Taleban hold Kabul and two-thirds of Afghan territory while the opposition coalition comprising Mr. Rabbani's Jamiat Islami, ethnic Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam and two Shiite Muslim factions control northern provinces.

Mr. Rabbani and his team had an "extensive" meeting with Mr. Sharif here late Tuesday, which was attended by Pakistani Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan and ambassador to Afghanistan, Iftikhar Murshid, officials said.

Mr. Sharif "stressed the need for all Afghan parties to settle their differences through negotiations so that a durable peace could be restored in Afghanistan," an official statement said after the meeting.

"The government of Pakistan is always available to all Afghan parties in order to promote a peaceful settlement," the prime minister told Mr. Rabbani.

Mr. Rabbani had further talks Wednesday with the Pakistani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Siddique Kanju.

## Queen Elizabeth II to praise Diana in Christmas message

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's Queen Elizabeth II is to praise Diana, Princess of Wales, and thank the public for their reaction to her death in her Christmas message, a report said Wednesday.

The Daily Mail said the queen will signal that she and the rest of the royal family have taken some lessons from the aftermath of the 36-year-old's death in a Paris car crash.

The royal family was heavily criticised in the press for failing to take part in the mass outpouring of public sorrow that swept Britain in the wake of Diana's death on August 31.

Many newspaper drew a stark contrast with a perceived royal aloofness and the easy-going chatty manner of the princess.

But the Mail said that on Christmas Day the queen would again thank the public for their messages of sympathy and the lessons the family learned from the events.

The royal family, particularly Prince Charles, have recently been praised in the British Press for appearing to take some hesitant steps towards modernisation, most notably adopting a far less formal attitude.

## Carlos to appeal life sentence

PARIS (AFP) — Former international guerrilla "Carlos the Jackal" will appeal against his life sentence for a triple murder in Paris in 1975, his lawyer, Isabelle Coutant-Peyre, said Wednesday.

Carlos, 48, a Venezuelan whose real name is Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, was found guilty early Wednesday of shooting dead two French secret service agents and a Lebanese informer.

He was handed over to France by Sudan in 1994 after almost 25 years on the run.

Ms. Coutant-Peyre said she and Carlos would formulate the appeal Friday when he is to be interviewed by anti-terrorist judge Jean-Louis Bruguiere.

The judge is investigating five other terrorist attacks attributed to Carlos in 1974, 1982 and 1983 in which 15 people died.

## China opens school for fat kids

BEIJING (AFP) — China has opened a special "winner camp" for the country's growing number of obese children, state media reported Wednesday.

The first 100 children to attend the camp will get five days of counselling on eating habits and will also carry out special exercises, the official Xinhua news agency said.

The director of a children's hospital in the northeastern city of Tianjin, who is running the camp, said "effective methods to rapidly reduce the weight of the children through proper diet and physical exercises" have been developed.

More and more children eat too much sugar and fat, do not get enough exercise and spend too much time in front of the television, the official agency said.

It said one of the first recruits at the camp, 12-year-old Qian Xi, weighed 84.5 kilograms.



A worker at Hong Kong's largest chicken market, Cheung Sha Wan, sprays water over chickens to clean his stall (Reuters photo)







## Jordan Times

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## In spirit of Christmas

ONCE AGAIN Christmas will be celebrated in the "land of peace" and elsewhere in the Middle East without peace looming in the horizon. Prospects for peace in 1998 unfortunately look even bleaker than before. The peace that all the peoples of the area have been longing for is still eluding them simply because the criteria for establishing it are ethically and spiritually improvised. The spirit of Christmas is nowhere to be found in the quest for a just and permanent settlement of the Palestinian problem.

The moral dimension of the conflict is largely removed from the Israeli agenda in dealing with the Arab side especially the Palestinians. Instead, we see Israeli political and military leaders roaming the West not in search for spiritual and ethical guidelines from the biblical lands but of material considerations pinned on short-sighted and ill-conceived ideological aims.

During a short visit to Amman Tuesday, Israeli Knesset member Yossi Beilin described the peace process as having reached its lowest point ever since the Madrid Conference six years ago. Mr. Beilin, who was the main architect of the Oslo accords, called for a return to the basics of past peace agreements before it is too late.

At this time of the year when Christians from all parts of the world commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ, it is a fitting occasion to inject elements of spirituality into the stalled peace talks. Complete reliance on naked material considerations or dimensions would not bring about the kind of peace that all future generations can live with. Israel's plan to seize half of the Palestinian lands would leave them with nothing viable to build on for their future and that of their children. In this important respect, the Israeli criteria are so devoid of all ethical and moral constraints.

If history teaches us anything it is that injustice will inevitably lead to instability and chaos. Likewise if there is any particular meaning to celebrating Christmas, it is the need to remember that in life as in all political pursuits, there is always an indispensable room for spirituality. Israeli leaders seem to have forgotten all about the needs and aspirations of others especially the Palestinians who have become victims of their naked military power, usurpation and occupation of Arab lands for much too long. Without all political settlements, justice and fairness would remain incomplete.

### ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

**Al Rai's** Fahed Fanek Wednesday focused on Iran's foreign policies especially with regard to its neighbours saying that its rulers have been playing their cards well and seeking to project their country at the international level. Referring to Iran's release of two Jordanian prisoners of war, the writer said Tehran chose to free the two men on the same day when the bodies of two Jordanians executed by Iraq for smuggling auto spare parts were returned to Amman. He said that by this gesture, Iran wanted to appear to Jordanians as the good neighbour deserving an apology from Amman for siding with Iraq in the eight-year-long Iraq-Iran war. As for Israel, Iran, which is openly hostile to the Jewish state, maintains trade links with Tel Aviv, Dr. Fanek said. He referred to a report published in the Jerusalem Post's weekly edition on Dec. 20, which gave details of Iran's trade exchanges with Israeli firms conducted directly or through a third party and amounting to \$1 billion annually. The writer also cited Tehran's support of Christian Armenia against Muslim Azerbaijan by saying Tehran is taking this stand for fear of Azerbaijan's future demand that Iran return to it parts of Azerbaijan which Iran still occupies and is siding with Greece against Turkey. Iran's rival in influencing former Asian republics of the former Soviet Union.

**Al Arab Al Yawm's** Oreib Rintawi wrote in support of a decision by local dailies to boycott Parliament's sessions because their reporters have been denied access to deputies' offices within the parliament's premises. He said the media needs the officials and deputies as much as these officials need the media to air their views. Jordanian papers have been accused of poor coverage of Parliament or government activities, and when they are trying to improve their performance they are faced with closed doors, he said. In other democracies the media has access to officials, and they publish the truth, taking into consideration the views of the different parties involved in an issue, said Rintawi. If the Jordanian journalists are to properly cover news, their mission should be facilitated not blocked, he demanded. The writer said that by closing the door to information the journalists feel as if they are living in one of the neighbouring Arab countries where information is withheld except to a very few and to the decision makers.

## View From Academia

## Downtown culture provides lesson on commitment

LAST FRIDAY morning, my son and I took a trip to the downtown area in Amman. He wanted to check out the pet shop opposite the Roman Theatre. We were told by friends to also check out the sidewalk in the heart of Talal Street where a number of people came every Friday specifically to sell some domestic animals and birds of all sorts: pigeons, doves, ducks, geese, etc. It was a pleasant morning; and if you liked rain (it was drizzling actually) and cool weather, it was almost perfect.

The downtown area has been and remains exciting in many ways. It is a meeting point of cultures. People from all parts of town as well as the country (and abroad) still frequent it: to buy vegetables, clothes, sandwiches, desserts, antiques, pets, etc.

I say "still" because things have changed. Not long ago (roughly up until the mid-seventies) the downtown area was central. People frequented it often. You had to go downtown to buy most necessities. Many people (usually old and young men) filled the traditional cafés to socialise, play cards, conduct business, exchange news, and talk politics. Not only this, (in the era prior to highways and tunnels) you had to drive through the downtown area if you wanted to go from one part of town to another.

Due to the influence of urbanisation, modernisation, expansion and city planning, Amman's downtown has been somewhat (if not greatly) de-centred, marginalised, and peripheralised. The shape of the capital has changed significantly. Rather than one centre, it now has many. And most people may not need to go downtown except on rare occasions.

Urbanisation, modernisation, expansion and city planning are a blessing in many ways; they have made our

lives more convenient. This we must admit. But they have also deprived us (many of us, I should say) from experiencing, partially or totally, the downtown-Amman way of life and culture.

On the said Friday morning, we made our way through the scenes which were once part of our daily lives: the Al-Husseini Mosque, the old cafés, the sahlab stands, the falafel restaurants, the water puddles, the peddlers on the sidewalks, etc. Despite the wear and tear of time, the downtown area still has much to offer: the sandwiches which we once relished (and still are), the delicious kenafa, the traditional tea and coffee, the familiar faces of pedestrians, sellers and peddlers, beggars, etc. Downtown is still unique.

We reached the heart of Talal Street. People were selling all kinds of stuff on the sidewalk: clothes, tools, foodstuffs, cigarettes, you name it. And when we got to the spot where birds and animals were sold, we found four old women, two old men, and several young people who offered them assistance, sitting on the muddy sidewalk amidst puddles of water, wearing clothes which did not exactly protect them from the cold weather; they were selling ducks, geese, turkeys, rabbits, etc. They looked cheerful, content, courteous, charming and happy. My son was elated at the sight of the pets. We bought a small duck (upon his insistence) and left.

Of all the sights downtown, that of these old women and men sitting on the muddy sidewalk that cold Friday morning stood out. There were other old women and men sitting behind small stands on which there were a few humble items: a couple of cigarette packs and small plastic bags containing melon-seed, sunflower seeds, etc.

How much money do these people make? How do

they make a living? How do they take care of their various expenses. I am amply familiar with our so-called popular areas, and I have written extensively about them in this column. But I have been away from the downtown area for sometime. In these difficult economic times, these old men and women (shivering but happy in the cold of the downtown area) are doing something heroic. They are doing the best they can to make ends meet. Theirs is a story of dignity, struggle, courage, hope, faith. It is a sad but also happy story.

But I wonder about our commitment to people who are trying to make ends meet? How can you make a living on a few small packs containing water-melon seeds and sun-flower seeds?

I was teaching Herman Melville's Redburn to my students three weeks ago. The last passage in one of the novel's chapters ("What Redburn saw in Launcelot's-Hey") describing the life of the poor and the miserable in Liverpool came to mind when I encountered the old women and men: "Surrounded as we are by the wants and woes of our fellow-men, and yet given to follow our own pleasures, regardless of their pains, are we not somewhat selfish?"

I know, of course, that many of us are having a rough time making ends meet ourselves. But compared to these old men and women (and young women and men and boys), we seem to be greatly privileged. I do not know what we can do to help these fellow humans (and others like them) beyond what we already do. But maybe we need to think more about the needs and wants of the less privileged. Maybe we need to get more involved somehow. I hate for us to leave it where Redburn left it. Ramadan provides us with the immediate opportunity to do so.

## 1997: Year-End Review, part I

Gwynne Dyer reviews major political events of 1997 around the globe in a two part series.

WELCOME TO the global village. 1997 will not go down in history as the year when everybody in the world suddenly became everybody else's electronic neighbour — that process has been under way for two decades — but it was certainly the year in which our new "villager" status became inescapably obvious. Take Princess Diana, for example.

Diana Spencer was the not very bright ex-wife of the not very exciting heir to the throne of Great Britain, not exactly the world's greatest power. Yet her untimely death in a car crash in September, while in Paris for a weekend with her new companion Dodi Fayed, commanded more media space around the planet than any event since the World War II.

In most places other than Britain, she was only famous for being famous. But she fit the paradigm for instant media "immortality": young, beautiful, famous, and prematurely dead by violent means. We've been seeing this sort of media phenomenon at the national level for decades, but Diana's death unleashed instant icon-making at the global level — and other adroit manipulators of the media then used her concern about landmine victims to smooth the path for a global treaty banning anti-personnel mines.

The unification of the planet's mythic landscape intrigues cultural psychologists and infuriates cultural nationalists. The unification of the world's financial systems, however, directly affects everybody's livelihood — as became painfully clear when the "tiger" economies of Asia went into steep decline one after another during the latter half of this year.

All across Southeast Asia, and now in South Korea as well, countries have seen their currencies drop by a third or a half in value in a few months. Foreign investment has fled, unemployment has soared, and foreign debts have become a crushing burden. It would be bad enough as a merely local problem — but it may not be.

### The heaviest news traffic in 1997 has certainly been in Asia.

The Asian economies in crisis account for under 5 per cent of global production. Their problems are largely due to a specific pattern of political cronyism and lavish, unsecured borrowing that was typical of the Asian tigers. But the other "emerging markets," from the former Soviet Union to Latin America, have already been hit by speculative pressures and investor flight as well — and at year's end it's still not certain that the Asian disease won't spread to cripple the whole global economy.

Logic says it shouldn't, but right now we are climbing up a steep learning curve about the real implications of tightly linked markets operating around the clock around the world. Instantaneous global communications are an excellent means for transmitting and magnifying global panic — and markets are, in the end, more psychological than logical in their reactions.

Global mythology, global economy, global psychology...but we shouldn't get too carried away with the notion of the all-conquering global village. Barriers to the free movement of people, goods, ideas and capital are falling all over the

planet, and some broad themes like democratisation clearly have global resonance. But most newsworthy events in the world this year still happened in particular places, to particular people.

The heaviest news traffic in 1997 has certainly been in Asia. This is not entirely surprising, since half the human race lives in Asia, but this year the continent is overfulfilling its norm — starting with the fact that there is famine in Asia in not one but two places.

Reports continue to emerge from North Korea that the population there is facing mass starvation. On the huge island of New Guinea, shared by the independent country of Papua New Guinea and the Indonesian province of West Irian, a prolonged drought has caused desperate hunger: in remote areas, only airdrops are keeping people alive.

The North Korean famine was caused by politics, but the New Guinea famine was due by the same very dry weather, presumably linked to El Nino, that farther west caused the massive forest fires that blanketed Singapore, Malaysia and much of Indonesia with a thick, choking haze for most of September and October. The pall of smoke was symbolically just right, considering what else was going on beneath and around it.

Not only did Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and South Korea go into financial meltdown at approximately monthly intervals, but all their neighbours began to look distinctly unhealthy as well.

Including Japan, where major banks and finance houses have closed and more are tottering — and China.

Two long-anticipated events finally came to pass in China this year: the death of "paramount leader" Deng Xiaoping in February, and the hand-over of Hong Kong to Beijing's rule in July. Both these events, like the 15th Party Congress in September that consecrated Deng's anointed successor, President Jiang Zemin, were carefully stage-managed and completely free of surprises.

But speculators began attacking the Hong Kong dollar towards the end of the year (though so far it has held firm), and people are even beginning to worry about the huge Chinese economy itself. Nobody believes President Jiang's promises about mass privatisations, strengthening the financial sector, and all the rest: with tens of millions already out of work, the political cost of keeping his promises would be too high. But if the Chinese economy isn't reformed, won't it go the way of the others?

Asia is also home to half the serious wars in the world (Africa has the rest). For a few days in June it looked as though the long civil war in Afghanistan was drawing to a close, when fundamentalist Taliban troops managed to occupy the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif. But then the Taliban were killed in their thousands by outraged local inhabitants, and now Afghanistan's north is again beyond their control.

In Sri Lanka in May, the government launched a two-pronged offensive to end the 14-year war against the Tamil separatists. Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga's government unveiled a constitutional reform package that would make the country a federal state and give the Tamil minority wide autonomy. At the same time, her army launched an offensive to open a ground route through the guerrilla-controlled north to the city of Jaffna, captured by government troops last year after a 5-year siege.

But her reform proposals faced fierce resistance from the opposition in the Sri Lankan parliament, the separatists refused to negotiate, and the war of attrition along the road to Jaffna is costing at least a hundred lives a mile. In October, the "Tamil Tigers" set off a truck bomb

right in the heart of Colombo, next to the 39-story twin towers of the World Trade Centre which had been officially opened by Kumaratunga one week before. The war is not over yet.

Then there are the start-up wars. Ex-Communist leader Hun Sen's July coup in Cambodia overturned the results of the U.N.-supervised 1993 election, and reignited a guerilla war between Hun Sen's army and royalist troops. In China's north-west province of Xinjiang, bloody riots against Chinese settlers in February by Uighurs, the Turkic-speaking Muslims who are still a bare majority of the local population, were punished by summary executions, which were in turn answered by bus bombings in Urumqi and Beijing.

But the news from Asia is not all bad. After 44 years of heavily armed truce, the

### The members of the EU have bought the Trojan horse that German Chancellor Helmut Kohl built to lure them into what will eventually become a federal state, and the potential consequences extend far beyond the present horizon.

two Koreas sat down in Geneva in November and began talking about a permanent peace in the peninsula. And on the democracy front, things have been going surprisingly well.

On Dec. 19, South Korea's perennial protester Kim Dae-Jung, twice the target of assassination attempts by the country's former military rulers, won the presidential election on his fourth try (just in time to face South Korea's worst economic crisis).

India is taking a painfully long time to complete its transition from a de facto one-party state (albeit with full civil and democratic rights) to a genuine multiparty system. The Congress Party, unable to get used to the idea that it no longer rules India by hereditary right, brought down yet another coalition government last month, precipitating the third general election in three years. But Congress will not do well in the election, and India's political re-alignment proceeds.

In Pakistan, where President Nawaz Sharif won the largest-ever majority in last March's parliamentary elections, he has just emerged triumphant from a long confrontation with President Farooq Leghari. Every elected Pakistani prime minister in the past decade has been dismissed by the president, generally acting at the army's bidding (Nawaz Sharif himself suffered that fate twice) — but this time it was the president who resigned.

And in Taiwan, the "other China," the ruling Kuomintang Party (KMT) suffered a shock defeat in November's municipal elections at the hands of the Democratic Progressive Party. Almost three-quarters of Taiwan's 21 million people now live in cities and counties run by the DPP, and the 1998 parliamentary elections may see the KMT finally lose power nationally after 50 years.

In Singapore in January and in Indonesia in June, ruling parties that have already been in power for over 30 years easily won re-election, but free elections in Thailand and the Philippines are an adequate counterbalance to that. It's fair to say that democracy is alive and well in

Asia despite the economic pain — and it couldn't be livelier in Australasia, where Australia began preparations for a referendum on the monarchy and New Zealand got its first woman prime minister.

In Europe, the big news is that Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) is going ahead one year from now, and that all the countries of the European Union except Britain, Sweden and Denmark will probably be in it from the start. This outcome was seriously in doubt at various points in the past year, but now the decision is well-nigh irrevocable: the main European currencies "lock in" for the run-up to the launch of the "euro" in only five months' time.

A single currency means a single interest rate — and in the long run, a single interest rate means a single government. The members of the EU have bought the Trojan horse that German Chancellor Helmut Kohl built to lure them into what will eventually become a federal state, and the potential consequences extend far beyond the present horizon.

Compared to this profound change in the pattern of European history, NATO's July decision to take in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary pales into insignificance. So does the EU's December decision to open membership talks with eleven ex-Communist countries plus Cyprus: if even five of them make it to full membership in the next five years, there will be some very surprised bureaucrats in Brussels.

The other great surprise in the EU is the come-back of the left. The most striking manifestation of this was the British Labour Party's triumphant return to power in May after 18 years in the wilderness, but the socialist victory in June's parliamentary elections in France was almost as significant.

With a left-wing coalition in power in Italy (for the first time in that country's history), and other leftist parties in power, either alone or as part of a coalition, in 10 other EU countries, the left can now dominate votes in the EU's Council of Ministers if it bangs together. This may presage a general resurgence of the left in the West, after the demoralisation and defeat-by-association of the period just after the collapse of Communism in Europe.

Farther east, however, on European Communism's home ground, the brief wave of comebacks by ex-Communist parties was ended by Poland's September election, which brought into office a right-wing coalition built around the old Solidarity party.

This followed the electoral defeat of the Romanian crypto-Communists one year ago, and the street protests that drove the Bulgarian ex-Communists from power last February. With Hungary's former Communists likely to lose their majority in this spring's election, the only remaining European government built on the old communist nomenklatura will be Slobodan Milosevic's autocratic nationalist/socialist regime in Serbia.

Eastern Europe is still a long way from the Promised Land, however. Albania dissolved into violent anarchy in February, only to pull itself back together with amazing speed in peaceful elections in June-July. The Czech Republic's reputation as the great post-Communist success story was seriously dented by the scandal that caused the fall of Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus's government in late November. And Russia's economy disappointed those who were predicting a recovery for the fifth year in a row.

Society on the move

Seasonal priorities cut events down to few

AS THE holiday season starts off and Ramadan approaches, Jordanians and expatriates were busier scurrying around with personal plans, but some still made some news worthy of note.

**AT IT AGAIN:** Jordanian architects are soaring to new heights. This week it was Rasem Badran who stole the show in a competition for a new Museum of Islamic Arts in Doha. Six internationally renowned architects, Oriol Bohigas (Spain), Charles Correa (India), Zaha Hadid (Iraq/U.K.), Richard Rogers (U.K.), James Wines (U.S.) and Mr. Badran submitted entries in the invited competition. The competition jury selected the submissions of Charles Correa and Rasem Badran as winners. Both designs were presented to the client, the State of Qatar, who selected the proposal of Mr. Badran. The planned museum is intended for the use and benefit of the people of Qatar while striving to become a significant cultural, education and research institute that will attract international visitors and scholars. Emphasis has been placed on the most advanced methods of display, museology, conservation and research as well as on the expansion and refinement of the existing collection. The museum will house for galleries: paintings and engravings; rare books, maps, prints, and manuscripts; numismatics; and weapons and armaments. To be located on a prominent site in Doha, Mr. Badran's project emulates the organic growth of the urban landscape, and creates a dialogue between the public, the museum and the city. Inauguration of the first phase of the museum is scheduled for the year 2000. The competition was coordinated by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Geneva.

the Jordan Kuwait Bank. The post is said to be a new one — information consultant. Mr. Daoudieh was born in the H-4 area in northeastern Jordan. He obtained a diploma in English from Amman schools and worked for the Ministry of Education from 1968 to 1976. He then went on to become a columnist for Al Dustour Arabic daily until 1992 when he was appointed director of the information office at the Royal Court. He was elected a member of parliament in 1993 for the Tafleh District. Should the talk prove accurate, Mr. Daoudieh, 50, will be working for his former boss Abdul Karim Kubariti. Mr. Daoudieh served as minister in the former prime minister's cabinet. Mr. Kubariti became chairman of the Jordan Kuwait Bank early last summer. He could not be reached to confirm, correct or deny the speculations as he was in Saudi Arabia at the time of this printing.

**NEW ENVOY NAMED:** At the Tunisian embassy in Amman recently arrived Ambassador Muncif Loweiti has returned to Tunis. Only here at his post for less than two months, Mr. Loweiti was obliged to return home for health reasons. Succeeding him is Hatem Ben Othman, a former minister of education. The appointment as ambassador will be Mr. Ben Othman's first diplomatic posting.

**ON THE JOB:** Arrived in Amman is UNICEF's new regional director for the Middle East and North Africa region Ibrahim Fall. Dr. Fall was feted at a evening party at the Regency Palace Hotel by his new colleagues last Saturday. He has since officially begun his duties.



Group picture of the jury, competitors and organising committee staff of the International Architectural Competition for a Museum of Islamic Arts in Doha, Qatar. Jordan's Rasem Badran is fifth from the left in the standing front row.

A Merry Christmas to all!

Jennifer Hamarneh

**IN THE MAKING?** Mohammad Daoudieh, former minister of youth, is rumoured to be in line for a job at

A time for Internet

By Jean-Claude Elias

THE SONG says "... there is a time for every purpose under heaven ..." The words of "Turn, Turn, Turn" were originally taken from ancient sacred writings but Beate Paul McCartney adapted the song and produced it for Mary Hopkins who made it famous in the late sixties. Whoever wrote the song however doesn't seem to have taken the Internet into consideration. They should have added "... a time for Internet ..."

It may appear a trivial point at first but once you start browsing the World Wide Web (WWW — another word for Internet) you discover that you must make room for it in your life, on a regular basis. It's the kind of thing that you hate or love — there's no reasonable measure in between. First you start with half an hour every two or three days. Then you gradually increase the dose until you reach a cruising speed of about one or two hours a day, this depending on the size of your wallet. Once you start exploring an interesting subject, time flies without you feeling it. Often, just to reach a piece of badly wanted information you may spend two or three hours on the Web. But whether you can or cannot afford to pay for 30 or 60 hours of connection time per month, some of your social habits will have to change.

Unless our Creator has treated you differently from the mere mortals and has given

chip talk



more than 24 hours per day, you will have to make some cuts. You can for instance decide to watch TV less often, to stop reading the Jordan Times (God forbid), to spend less quality time with your children or, easier to do, with your spouse. If you belong to the limited elite who has access to Internet from the office where you work, you can always turn the computer's screen away from your colleagues or your visitors and pretend you are deeply concentrating on some business matter, while you'll be actually surfing on the Web. One way or another a modification in your daily routine will occur.

Someone said that if you smoke less than ten cigarettes a day then you're not really a smoker. If you don't "connect" more than say 20 hours per month then you're not really an Internet surfer, and you're not getting much out of it. So learn to better know yourself and be ready to answer when asked: "do you surf?"

Princess Diana's death voted top story of 1997

By Paul Alexander  
Associated Press

THE DEATH of Princess Diana in a Paris car crash was overwhelmingly voted the top news story of 1997 in an international poll of Associated Press subscribers.

The Diana tragedy headed a year of high-profile obituaries that included Nobel Laureate Mother Teresa, Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, Zaire strongman Mobutu Sese Seko and designer Gianni Versace.

"Death of the famous — violent and not — was featured on the front pages quite often this year," Italian news agency AGI noted on its ballot.

Ballots were submitted by 119 news media subscribers in 43 countries on six continents, with editors listing their top 10 story choices. Ten points were awarded for each first-place vote, nine points for second and so on down to one point per 10th-place vote.

The death of Diana in the early hours of Aug. 31, along with her companion Dodi Fayed

and their driver, prompted an outpouring of grief worldwide.

Television networks around the globe covered Diana's funeral live. Newspapers like the Cyprus Weekly — which said in its ballot that the story received the most coverage in its 18-year history — ran special editions and tributes.

The story garnered 48 first-place votes and a total of 908 points to easily outdistance two Asian stories that finished in a near tie for second place.

The handover of Hong Kong's control from Britain to China was the runner-up in the poll with 529 points.

Ranked no. 3, with 527 points, it was the currency crisis that began in Thailand and quickly affected other Asian countries and caused stock market turmoil worldwide with 527 points.

In fourth, with 305 points, was the death of Mother Teresa, the tireless campaigner for the poor, sick and underprivileged.

Next were the elections of the Labour Party's Tony Blair as Britain's new prime minister, fifth with 280 points, and the

terrorist attack in Luxor, Egypt, that left 68 people dead, mostly tourists, no. 6 with 280 points.

The death of Deng Xiaoping ranked seventh with 275 points. Followed by the near-stalemate in the Mideast peace process and terrorist attacks in Jerusalem, eighth with 267 points.

In ninth place with 266 points was the four-month hostage siege in Lima, Peru, which ended when commandos stormed the Japanese embassy and rescued diplomats and other officials while killing the hostage-takers.

The successful cloning of an adult sheep named "Dolly" by Scottish scientists, which sparked a debate over the procedure's ethics, was 10th with 251 points.

The second 10 stories, with point totals:

— The standoff between the U.N. and Iraq over weapons inspections, 238.

— The Pathfinder space probe lands on Mars, 235.

— NATO invites Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to

join, 176.

— Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko ousted in civil war and dies in exile, 173.

— Leftist parties win French parliamentary elections, 159.

— Muslim violence shakes Algeria, 152.

— Haze from Indonesia forest fires blankets Southeast Asia, 121.

— Swiss banks reveal holo-caust accounts, 100.

— Fashion designer Versace shot to death in Miami, 91.

— Mir space station troubles, 90.

Other stories that earned at least 50 points were North Korea's famine and economic troubles; Cambodia's coup and Pol Pot's trial; air crashes in Sumatra and Guam; the El Nino weather phenomenon; the start of talks between Britain and Sinn Fein; and the continued spread of AIDS.

Last year, the top stories were U.S. President Bill Clinton's re-election and the political and physical comeback of Russia's Boris Yeltsin.

At the crossroads between economy and security

The Arab World and Turkey: Economy and Regional Security  
edited by Dr. Fatih Al-Bustany  
Amman: Arab Thought Forum, 1997, 107 pages, JE 3.500

IN MARCH 1996, a seminar on Arab-Turkish relations was held in Amman, organised by the Arab Thought Forum in conjunction with the Foundation of Middle East and Balkan Studies, the Turkish Foreign Ministry's Centre for Strategic Studies, and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. This book documents the proceedings of the seminar where 17 Arab experts, journalists and military officers joined 13 Turkish participants of similar backgrounds, to discuss possibilities for more Arab-Turkish cooperation. While most came in their capacity as experts rather than representing governments, their varying national outlooks emerged when the discussions turned to certain issues.


The first two working papers were delivered by Turkish professors of economics, who advocated increased Turkish-Arab trade, without altering Turkey's historical slant towards the West. From this perspective, Turkey's accession to the European Customs Union should not hinder its trade with Middle East countries, but rather allow it to serve as a bridge between these countries and Europe.

The third presentation gave an Arab perspective on the same topic. Dr. Fadhil Chalabi noted that Arab-Turkish economic relations only became significant after the oil boom of the 70s: since then,

Turkey's trade has been predominantly with oil-rich countries like Saudi Arabia, Libya and Iraq. In Dr. Chalabi's view, this type of trade has reached a plateau: "Under the present and likely future conditions of the international oil industry, oil alone cannot be the engine of growth of economic relations... Rather than exclusive ties to the EU or a few oil countries, Dr. Chalabi advocated "economic interdependence in a regional partnership" to increase productivity and employment opportunities beneficial to both Turkey and its southern Arab neighbours.

Water interjected itself as a bone of contention in the following session on regional security. While the Arab working paper named a broad spectrum of threats to security, ranging from "religious extremism" to Israel's nuclear arsenal, the Turkish presentation noted that "the threat perceptions of the Turkish political elite consist mainly of a non-nuclear threat from Syria and Iraq in the south and from Greece in the west." The focus was on Syria's support to the PKK and its possible teaming up with Iraq against Turkey's control of the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. The rapprochement between Israel and Turkey was also explained in this context.

Several Arab participants took exception to the near-paranoid view of Syria which was presented. Interestingly enough, so did one of the Turkish participants. Professor Samir Salha, who expressed his aspirations for a more pro-Arab Turkish foreign

  
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policy: "Reasonable policies should be adopted which embrace more important goals than merely benefiting from Middle East oil, water and trade possibilities. One such goal is the slowing down of nuclear armament." Other goals named by Dr. Salha were adopting "a new strategy to face the Israeli policy," insuring that Palestinians enjoy equal rights like any other people in the region, and that Syria and Lebanon recover all the terri-

Book Review

The baa that signalled science's entry into the 21st century

By Mark Burleigh  
Agence France Presse

PARIS — The unveiling this year of Dolly the sheep, the first clone of an adult animal, was an event that ricocheted around the world with all the impact — and with as many implications — as the explosive entrance of the A-bomb. Here for the first time was a mammal created from a single cell with the exact same genetic make-up as its adult donor. The hands behind the creation — which predictably enough stirred up a maelstrom of debate among scientists, ethicists and the public over its possible application to humans — were not God's, nor nature's. They belonged to two Scottish researchers named Keith Campbell and Ian Wilmut, working for the Roslin Institute near Edinburgh.

Animals had been created before from embryo cells for the past 10 years, during which the consensus was that it was impossible to programme an adult cell to create a separate being based on the same DNA. Campbell and Wilmut disproved that by taking a cell from the udder of a ewe (hence "Dolly" — named after the buxom U.S. country singer Dolly Parton), reducing its nutrients to a level where cell-division

ceases and it can be reprogrammed, then fusing it to an unfertilised egg cell from another ewe before implanting it in a ewe and setting it on its way to its birth on July 5, 1996.

It was not a fool-proof method. Of 277 "tries" which produced 13 pregnancies, Dolly was the only surviving foetus. But one was all it took. For many seeing in it obvious application for genetically-manipulated human beings, it was one too many. Wilmut's acknowledgement that human clones would now be possible — but not desirable, he said — within two to 10 years triggered white-hot controversy.

U.S. President Bill Clinton announced right after Dolly that his government was banning funding for research on human cloning for five years, the World Health Organisation and the Vatican declared firmly such a use would be morally and ethically deplorable. A summit gathering leaders from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Russia and the United States in Denver in June resolved to prevent human cloning from taking place.

Humorists did not let the development go, either. "Is it really that big a deal?" cracked U.S. television host Jay Leno. "Don't all sheep pretty much look

alike anyway?" But the debate over the ramifications of the feat have done little to curb the scientific — and commercial — consequences.

PPL Therapeutics, which backed Wilmut and Campbell's research, announced that in July it had created Polly, another sheep. This one carrying a human gene that should allow it to produce milk enriched with human protein. And in December, the company said it had created three lambs which would produce milk with a human protein which is designed to help in the treatment of haemophilia. Then there was a suggestion from Chen Dayuan, a researcher with Beijing's Institute of Zoology, that China's endangered giant panda would be a prime candidate for cloning.

A U.S. company, ABS Global Inc., said in August that it was already moving along a similar path, using a different cloning technique to produce a calf named Gene. But Dolly, now 18-months-old, is lined up to make another contribution to history. According to The Times newspaper in Britain, a jumper is to be knitted from her wool, which is to be exhibited for posterity in the Science Museum in London.

Sally Bland



## IMF warns Asian crisis could deepen further

WASHINGTON (R) — The financial crisis in Asia could deepen and spread in the months ahead, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned in a report, urging developing countries to brace against the economic fallout.

In its interim world economic outlook, the IMF slashed its combined growth forecasts for Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines by a whopping 3.7 percentage points to 1.7 per cent for 1998, and said turmoil in Asia would dampen global growth.

It predicted growth in Japan of only 1.1 per cent in 1998, and said growth in South Korea was expected to fall to 2.5 per cent next year from 6.0 per cent this year.

"Undoubtedly, people are going to feel the pain of this adjustment," IMF Chief Economist Michael Mussa said at a news conference to present the report.

In recent months, the IMF has had to put together multi-billion loans to rescue South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia after the July 2 crash of the Thai baht cur-

rency sent economic shockwaves across Southeast Asia.

The extent of the financial shock to hit Asia took the international lending agency by surprise, the IMF said. Neither economic forecasts nor asset prices in the financial markets foretold the "depth and breadth" of the crisis to come, it said.

While acknowledging that some of its previous forecasts for the region were "too optimistic," the IMF said it repeatedly warned authorities in Asia about the risks. But to no avail.

"When economic conditions

remain generally good and when private foreign capital is flowing at a record pace and on very attractive terms, it is easy to believe that the good times will continue," the report said.

Although uncertain of how long the crisis will last, the IMF said the economic pain was far from over, and warned that market turmoil could spread.

For those countries already affected, the IMF said economic reforms must not be put off. Hesitation can only worsen the crisis, cause markets to drop further, and exacerbate contagion to other emerging markets and to more developed countries, it said.

The crisis has already led to a dramatic slowdown in private capital flows to emerging economies in all regions, with the sharpest drop in Asia, the IMF said. These flows to developing and newly industrialised economies will drop by \$80 billion in 1997 alone, the fund estimated.

Painful adjustments will need to be made in emerging markets around the world, the fund said, as fiscal policies are tightened, domestic investment and consumption are compressed, imports decline, and economic growth slows or, in some cases, turns negative.

The IMF said capital flows to developing countries would remain low in the months ahead as investors become more cautious and as borrowers postpone new issues because of the high cost of accessing the international capital markets.

As the crisis drags on, the IMF said other developing countries are more likely to be drawn in.

"Many countries are vulnerable to reversals of market sentiment," the IMF said. "It is therefore critical that countries take the necessary steps to reduce their vulnerability."

To protect their economies, the fund said developing countries should contain their external deficits and strengthen their banking systems. In some cases, exchange rate policies may need to be changed.

Though bleak in the near term, the IMF said investor sentiment towards emerging markets would begin to turn around in the course of 1998, and that countries hard hit by the Asian crisis, after a significant slowdown in growth next year, will see a pickup in 1999.

The crisis may even pass along a few benefits to the former "Asian tigers." It may help the region put a lid on large current account deficits as private capital moves elsewhere, the IMF said.

"These economies have the potential to regain the confidence of investors at home and abroad," the IMF said. "As confidence returns, growth can also be expected to recover."

## HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) A trip that extends all the way through Sunday would be easy and fun. You'll do best this evening in romance with an old friend. If you're not married, it's the person you wish you were married to. Start by talking about old times and see what develops.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) You and your mate need to return some things you got recently. You'd better go together. After you decide what to trade in, get something you like better. Make sure you don't spend more money, though. That's a terrible temptation, and even you might do it.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) You and your sweetheart need to renew an old bond. You'll be talking more about the past than the present. Speaking of presents, don't you have some presents you still need to exchange? You can do that while you're having your conversation. It'll be fun.

**CANCER:** (June 22 to July 21) How can you be shopping now? Well, you're good with money. You haven't amassed that fortune by squandering your resources. So take back the stuff you don't want and buy a bunch of other stuff on sale. And have a great time while you're at it.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) This is a good time to renew your partnership vows. Go back over old times and relieve old memories, too. If you've got a photo album, the two of you could go through it together. If you've got family around, you could share. Your romance might be contagious.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) You and your sweetheart have been working together lately, and that's very bonding. You might notice difficult in the relationship if you try something new this afternoon. If you don't already have a tradition established, make one up tonight.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) Your partner is under stress. Don't wait to be told; ask what needs to be done. Also, be there for a loved one who's had it rough. The holidays will bring up old memories. You're a good counsellor, so offer words of wisdom and a shoulder to cry on. That's what friends are for.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) You could start the day with breakfast for loved ones. Don't do all the work; let others join in the fun. If you've been cranky lately, shame on you. That's because you were trying to do everything. Be the manager instead. That's where your natural talent lies.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) For the next few weeks, do things you've done before rather than start new projects. It's always easier to learn if you're taking a class over. Practice is a good idea, too. Don't be too anxious to plunge into unfamiliar waters.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) You could be running out of money. You want to provide the best for your loved ones. Well, you may be in for a surprise. When you go to buy things on sale, you may find that you've credit cards are maxed out. Not to worry. The best things in life are still free.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) Although you're witty, brilliant and affectionate, you'll have a bit of a setback in romance. You're only lucky in old relationships right now. If the present one isn't working, how about reviving one from the past? Call up an old mate you'd like to see again.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) This morning it'll be easy to hear other people's thoughts. If you haven't been doing that, maybe you haven't been practising. If it's difficult later to get through to a person you love, don't blame yourself. It's because Venus is going retrograde. Keep trying.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

## HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) It seems like you've been running into nothing but problems. Well, that's in the past. From now through the weekend, you'll have smooth sailing. Take advantage of the opportunity. There are people to see, things to do and adventure awaiting. Skiing, anyone?

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) Items you bought a few days ago at full price are now sitting in the stores at half price, mocking you. If you were really smart, you would have saved your Christmas shopping for now. If your agenda is to save money, that's the way to do it.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) You've been having silly misunderstandings with your mate. This is mostly because you're saying one thing and the other person is hearing another. Well, all that is starting to clear up. It's going to be easier to get your meaning across for the next few weeks. Practice tonight.

**CANCER:** (June 22 to July 21) Besides your regular workload, you're getting to do something you've wanted to do for quite some time. You'll also find something you've been looking for. It could be an item, but it could also be information. That ought to be enough to get you busy. Go for it.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) This is a nice day for romance and relationships with children. Confusion is beginning to clear up. Some of the stresses of the season are beginning to fade. And your workload seems to have diminished considerably. You'll have time to play, so that's your assignment.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) Conditions are excellent for unexpected company. That's been happening through this entire holiday season. Many of those who said they couldn't make it are likely to show up anyway. If you've got people like that on your list, give them another call. Get some advance notice.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) Have you had your annual block party yet? If not, arrange one. Take jams and jellies and treats, and whatever else you've got around the place. If there's something you've been doing a couple years running, do it again. Everybody loves traditions.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) Don't spend a recent windfall. It's more important to gather resources now. Don't give it all away to charity, either, although that's a nice idea. Save a little for yourself. If you don't think along those lines, this windfall could slip right through your fingers.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) You can visit the sales, but don't feel compelled to spend. Only buy things that are worth having. To save even more, stay home and watch television instead. Other than that, your life should get easier. You'll find that it's easier to speak clearly. That'll be a relief.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) This is a good day for gathering information. You might find out some stuff you've been wondering about for quite some time. To push things along in that direction, ask questions. People will be honour-bound to answer. This could get real interesting.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) During the next few years, the truth will be revealed in all sorts of ways. Right now, there's a veritable arsenal well of new information on old topics bubbling out. Get together with friends and catch up on gossip. Even you won't believe some of this stuff.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) There's been confusion lately in your career communication tangles have kept you from achieving your goals. Well, those are all starting to lighten up. By Monday, you could get another fabulous opportunity. Try again, even if you failed before.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

## REUTERS

## The Business of Information

## Major Currencies &amp; Cross Rates

Prices as at 24/12/97 20:25

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7725	0.5888	1.4324	128.87	1.4355	1740.10	1.9970	5.9285
DE Mark	0.5642	-	0.3377	0.8085	73.24	0.8094	991.91	1.1270	3.3462
GB Sterling	1.6697	2.9695	-	2.3856	216.15	2.3969	2905.10	3.3340	9.9893
CH Franc	0.6861	1.2356	0.4178	-	90.63	1.0016	1213.88	138.38	4.1377
JP Yen	0.0077	1.3840	0.4609	1.1023	-	1.1047	13.39	163.74	4.8641
CA Dollar	0.6966	1.2362	0.4178	0.9967	1.10	-	1211.60	1.3919	4.1348
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0186	0.3442	0.0823	1341.38	0.8249	-	11.48	3.4083
NL Guilder	0.0008	88.69	0.2887	71.70	64.97	0.7183	870.70	-	2.9877
FR Franc	0.1686	0.2887	0.1008	24.1389	21.87	0.2419	33.66	33.8600	-

## Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	AED	LBP	EGP	
US Dollar	-	0.7060	3.7508	0.3770	3.6405	0.3045	3.6728	1622.50	3.3950
Jordan Dinar	1.4164	-	5.3125	0.8340	6.1665	0.4313	8.2023	2186.52	4.8089
Saudi Riyal	0.2668	0.1882	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0812	0.98	405.94	9.9052
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8726	9.9493	-	9.65	0.8077	9.74	4038.35	9.0051
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1939	1.0302	1.0302	-	0.0836	1.01	418.21	9.9326
Kuwait Dinar	3.2841	2.3186	12.3172	1.2381	11.96	-	12.06	6000.00	0.9326
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1922	1.0212	1.0208	0.9912	0.0828	-	414.63	9.9244
Lebanese/1000	0.66	0.4637	2.4834	0.2478	2.3911	0.2000	2.4123	-	2.2289
Egyptian	0.2946	0.2080	1.1047	0.1110	1.0723	0.0897	1.0818	448.45	-

## Energy

Cty	USD	Previous
Brent	17.25	17.32
W. Texas	18.38	18.36
Bonny	17.25	17.32
Dubai	16.00	16.85
UL Gas	171.00	171.00

## Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2668	0.4728	0.18974	0.3921	34.6476
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.48288	0.16307	0.3902	35.3819
KW Dinar	3.2841	6.82411	1.96698	4.70588	426.803
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.70367	1.58856	3.80084	344.709
CY Pound	1.9177	3.3978	1.1482	2.7459	248.961

## Metal Prices

Metal	Std.	Off.
Gold (oz's)	286.2	286.7
Silver (oz's)	6.27	6.29
Platinum (oz's)	363	365
AL (3 Months)	1825	1827
CU (3 Months)	1747	1751
Zinc (3 Months)	1107	1111
Lead (3 Months)	541	544
NI (3 Months)	5960	5990

## Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Period	1	3	6	9	12
Ctry	Months	Months	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.87	6.65	6.68	6.87	6.90
GBP	7.34	7.63	7.56	7.56	7.50
JPY	0.44	0.40	0.30	0.28	0.26
DEM	3.62	3.67	3.72	3.81	3.89
FRF	3.48	3.58	3.68	3.77	3.83
CHF	1.25	1.38	1.50	1.56	1.66
ITL	5.90	5.76	5.49	5.19	5.00

## JOD Cross Rates

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1779	1.1838
DE Mark	0.3988	0.4008
CH Franc	0.4938	0.4964
FR Franc	0.1191	0.1197
JP Yen	0.5437	0.5464
NL Guilder	0.3538	0.3556
IT Lira	0.4063	0.4083

\* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

## THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

TMSPuzzles@aol.com

**ACROSS**

- Notoriety
- Tennis tactic
- Marries in haste
- Aquarium adjuncts
- Greet the villain
- Variant of cowpox
- Snack
- Unbroken
- Last one
- Horned viper
- Word derived from someone's name
- Guys' dates
- Greek letters
- Outgoing
- Sub tracker
- Behind closed doors, in court
- Unmowed
- Upstate New York river
- Wanted
- Table in a tabernacle
- Wooden pegs
- Garr of "Mr. Mom"
- Part of QED
- Faith
- Segment of history
- Aboveboard
- Composer
- Baudelaire collection "Les fleurs du"
- Mir room
- Part of A.D.
- Foreigner's status
- Asian apes, casually
- Grammatical rules
- Mail-order purchase, perhaps

**DOWN**

- Dry run
- Sewing machine inventor
- Schedules for a later date
- Boom times
- Poke fun
- Bars legally
- Rome airport
- Making preparations
- Killer whale
- Evidence
- restlessness
- Gordon Sumner on stage
- Japanese car maker
- Window on a corbel
- Former Russian despots
- W.C.
- Mugger stopper
- Mineo and
- Acress Turner
- Woodwind
- player's purchase
- Tuna
- Valuing highly
- Change positions
- Trapeze artist, e.g.
- Social climber
- Waste
- "Lakme," composer
- Acress Ullmann
- Old tar
- Lanchester and Schiaparelli
- Response
- Once more
- Be silent, in music
- Botanist's concern
- Actress Olin
- Negligent
- Affected with rabies

By Willy A. Wiseman  
New York, NY

C	H	A	D	A	R	A	D	S	P	C	A		
H	O	L	E	C	H	A	N	O	E	C	H	O	W
A	R	T	I	E	C	H	O	K	E	A	I	D	A
N	N	E	L	E	O	N	P	A	R	L	A	Y	
G	E	R	A	L	D	O	R	E	H	A	B		
V	E	E	D	I	S	O	B	E	Y	S			
A	C	R	E	R	E	A	L	I	T	Y	R	O	E
S	O	U	R	S	A	V	E	S	U	T	R	A	
P	H	D	C	O	R	E	Y	S	T	S	K	S	
S	O	Y	B	E	A	N	S	A	A	A			
B	A	N	K	S	E	U	C	H	E	R	E	D	
W	E	A	S	E	L	A	R	T	E	E	A	R	
A	L	G	A										
V	I	T	A	L									
E	A	S	T										
D	R	E	A	D									
E	O	N	S										

## Peanuts



## Andy Capp



## Mutt'n' Jeff



## THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



## JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME. By Henri Arnold and Mike Anglin

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

CELEX

ROAPE

GLABEN

NYLKID

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here:

Saturday's Jumbles: DUSKY CATCH BUTANE DULCET  
Answer: What the boss did when business was slow - CUT BACK



# Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

## JIC nets JD2.9 million from selling state equity in 19 public shareholding firms

**\*\* THE JORDAN Investment Corporation (JIC), the government's arm looking after its investments, sold the state equity in 19 public shareholding companies during 1997, JIC Director General Mohammad Batayneh has revealed. The sale covered the investments that were less than five per cent in those companies. "The investments were small and we were not relying much on them for capital gains inasmuch as getting rid of our equity in as many companies," he clarified.**

Mr. Batayneh indicated that the sales generated about JD2.9 million of capital gains. In 1996, the corporation achieved capital gains of around JD32 million from selling government equity in a number of public shareholding companies. The JIC chief expected the profit of the corporation to reach about JD16 million. Mr. Batayneh pointed out that 80 per cent of the JIC profit come from the phosphate, potash and cement companies — Jordan's main three companies in which the government has equity. The remaining 20 per cent of profit come from state investments in other companies.

"The JIC has put for sale the government

equity in the Jordan Worsteds Mills Company, the Jordan Tobacco and Cigarettes Company and the Jordan Paper and Cardboard Factories and sought reinvestments in the Ma'in Spa but no serious offers were received. Mr. Batayneh said that most of the purchase offers were less than the real evaluation of the shares. "Our general understanding of privatisation is to provide the highest level of opportunity to the participation of the private sector but not at the expense of the price of the shares on sale," he stressed.

He clarified the ambiguity that surrounds the Ma'in Spa by pointing out that the company is not for sale but open for reinvestment in a practical and realistic way in order to make the site more attractive for Arab and foreign tourism. The Ma'in Spa Company (Hammamat Ma'in) was established in 1982 and currently suffers from financial problems and accumulated losses.

Mr. Batayneh said that a committee has been formed to study the offers presented for reinvestment in the project which requires between \$5 and \$6 million in renovation costs (Al Dustour).

## Fariz directs Jordanian private sector to IDB financing

By Tareq Ayyoub  
Special to the Jordan Times

**AMMAN — Central Bank Governor Ziyad Fariz Wednesday urged the private sector to make use of financial opportunities provided by the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank (IDB).**

Dr. Fariz told businessmen at a seminar organised by Jordan Contractors Association that total financial assistance extended by the IDB to Jordan over the past 24 years reached \$863.6 million.

Out of this, \$254.3 million were used to finance development projects while the rest went to fund Jordan's imports and exports.

Dr. Fariz said the 52-member state IDB, set up in 1973, had financed two projects worth \$14.7 million for the Housing Bank and the Jordan Export Development Corporation.

Jordanian contractors, many of them suffering from financial problems in a limited market, could benefit from projects financed by the IDB in other countries "through entering bids to win tenders to implement these projects," Dr. Fariz said.

Dr. Fariz added that the bank offered technical assistance and training programmes.

"The private sector has benefited directly and indirectly from loans given by the IDB through government projects that were implemented by the private sector," said Dr. Fariz.

IDB Deputy President Suleiman Ali told the meeting that the institution had launched new opportunities



Central Bank governor (third from right) addresses the seminar

for the private sector industrialists, traders and contractors in member states.

Mr. Ali said the IDB has set up the \$1,500 million Infrastructure Financing Fund, where \$250 million will come from the IDB and the rest from private sectors in the 52 members, to finance "giant projects" such as transportation, communication and electric ventures.

"The IDB will work as a catalyst because the proposed fund will have its own independence," said Mr. Ali.

The IDB aims at fostering socio-economic development in line with Islamic Sharia.

It also takes part in equity funding, offers financial assistance and grants loans for productive projects and

enterprises besides providing financial assistance.

The bank can accept deposits and mobilise financial resources through appropriate modes of financing and by providing technical assistance and vocational training for personnel engaged in development activities in Muslim countries.

The capital of the IDB stands at six billion of Islamic dinars (one dinar is equivalent to one Special Drawing Right (SDR)).

The bank functions under Islamic rules which ban "Riba", which means interest and usury.

In parallel to the IDB, Islamic banking is growing worldwide.

There are about 75 retail Islamic banks operating across the globe with

Malaysia and Turkey among the strongest markets. In two countries with Islamic regimes, Iran and Sudan, all domestic transactions are governed by Islamic rules.

The Gulf has more than a dozen Islamic banks, including a new one opened last month in Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates.

The Arab World's largest bank, the Arab Banking Corp. in Bahrain, announced in November that it will soon launch an Islamic subsidiary.

Islamic financing actually has its roots in the camel caravans that used to cross the Arabian deserts. Wealthy merchants would put up the money to traders to buy and transfer goods.

## HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) It seems like you've been running into nothing but problems. Well, that's in the past. From now through the weekend, you'll have smooth sailing. Take advantage of the opportunity. There are people to see, things to do and adventure awaiting. Skiing, anyone?

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) Items you bought a few days ago at full price are now sitting in the stores at half price, mocking you. If you were really smart, you would have saved your Christmas shopping for now. If your agenda is to save money, that's the way to do it.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) You've been having silly misunderstandings with your mate. This is mostly because you're saying one thing and the other person is hearing another. Well, all that is starting to clear up. It's going to be easier to get your meaning across for the next few weeks. Practice tonight.

**CANCER:** (June 22 to July 21) Besides your regular workload, you're getting to do something you've wanted to do for quite some time. You'll also find something you've been looking for. It could be an item, but it could also be information. That ought to be enough to get you busy. Go for it.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) This is a nice day for romance and relationships with children. Confusion is beginning to clear up. Some of the stresses of the season are beginning to fade. And your workload seems to have diminished considerably. You'll have time to play, so that's your assignment.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 21) Conditions are excellent for unexpected company. That's been happening through this entire holiday season. Many of those who said they couldn't make it are likely to show up anyway. If you've got people like that on your list, give them another call. Get some advance notice.

**LIBRA:** (September 22 to October 21) Have you had your annual block party yet? If not, arrange one. Take jams and jellies and treats, and whatever else you've got around the place. If there's something you've been doing a couple years running, do it again. Everybody loves traditions.

**SCORPIO:** (October 22 to November 21) Don't spend a recent windfall. It's more important to gather resources now. Don't give it all away to charity, either, although that's a nice idea. Save a little for yourself. If you don't think along those lines, this windfall could slip right through your fingers.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) You can visit the sales, but don't feel compelled to spend. Only buy things that are worth having. To save even more, stay home and watch television instead. Other than that, your life should get easier. You'll find that it's easier to speak clearly. That'll be a relief.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) This is a good day for gathering information. You might find out some "stuff" you've been wondering about for quite some time. To push things along in that direction, ask questions. People will be honour-bound to answer. This could get real interesting.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) During the next few years, the truth will be revealed in all sorts of ways. Right now, there's a veritable antiseptic well of new information on old topics bubbling up. Get together with friends and catch up on gossip. Even you won't believe some of this stuff.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) There's been confusion lately in your career communication angles have kept you from achieving your goals. Well, these are all starting to tighten up. By Monday, you could get another fabulous opportunity. Try again, even if you failed before.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

## Layoffs by U.S. firms do not signal economic downturn

**NEW YORK (AFP) —** Eastman Kodak is the latest of several major U.S. companies to announce large lay-offs, though analysts say this does not necessarily mean the economy is headed toward hard times.

"You have people that for three years have been looking for signs showing that the U.S. economy is about to go into recession. They use stories like that to say, 'here it goes.' But it is not the case and it is not going to be the case anytime in the next 18 months," said Ken Goldstein of Conference Board, an economic forecasting institute.

Besides Eastman Kodak, which Thursday announced nearly 17,000 layoffs, Woolworth, Citicorp and International Paper have each announced 9,000 job cuts recently.

In the past nine months, 15 U.S. firms have laid off at least 2,000 employees each.

"Layoffs have not made the headlines before October," along with the financial crisis in Asia, Mr. Goldstein said.

He noted that the United States back in 1991 was losing an average of 500,000 jobs a week, dropping to 350,000 at the start of this year.

"The real story for 1997 is that the trend rate has slowed down to 300,000," he added. "Most of it is being done by attrition, a fraction is being done by actually telling the people to leave."

Unemployment fell to 4.6 per cent in November, the lowest level since October 1973. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has predicted a slight rise in unemployment by 1999.

Mr. Goldstein said the layoffs at Eastman Kodak were a special case since they were related to difficulties the manufacturer of photographic material was facing — rising international competition and bad investments.

Besides cutting 16,600 jobs, Eastman Kodak's also announced a \$1.5-billion special charge for restructuring company operations.

Kodak, which has 100,500 employees worldwide, has cited stiff competition from Japanese rival Fuji Film as one reason for its drop in profits. The two are locked in a battle over alleged Japanese trade barriers.

Kodak suffered a defeat earlier this month when a World Trade Organisation panel rejected its claims against Fuji.

"For companies in trouble," Mr. Goldstein explained, layoffs are "one of the things they can do to try not only to reassure investors but to show that they are going to restructure to make some profits in the future."


Linda Bell, a Haverford College (Pennsylvania) economist specialising in the labour market, stressed that U.S. companies were inclined to replace full-time employees with part-timers or temporaries to cut social security, pension and health care costs.

"But I don't see (layoffs) as a way of making workers more scared that they already are," she added. "U.S. workers are scared enough."

Nevertheless, Ms. Bell said, "Economics is more and more turned on its head because what you see from the latest employment record is wages and salaries are finally starting to rise."

So far, the strong growth of the U.S. economy (more than 4.0 per cent per year) had not led to rising inflation, despite the low level of unemployment.

Ms. Bell believes the latest round of layoffs are "part of a leaner and meaner American corporate machine" and have more to do with mergers and buy-outs that involve restructuring programmes.

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHARISANI											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 24/12/1997											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
346,000	249,000	ARAB BANK	14.9	1.23	11	440	143070	325.50	324.75	-.75	
N 2,340	1,680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	2	0.00	20	110269	198432	1.80	1.79	-.01	
S 3,600	1,800	BANK OF JORDAN	5.8	0.00	5	3536	6502	1.80	1.85	+.05	
S 2,680	1,730	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	6.11	0.00	9	10550	18010	1.74	1.71	-.03	
S 1,100	4,750	THE HOUSING BK.	15.3	3.79	4	1525	7805	5.13	5.12	-.03	
S 4,180	1,850	JOR. KUMAT BANK	11.1	0.00	6	1517	3061	2.06	2.08	+.02	
S 980	620	JOR. OULP BANK	3.9	10.61	17	40562	27091	.66	.66	-	
S 4,050	2,280	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	12.2	4.00	18	5800	13936	2.28	2.29	+.01	
S 1,530	1,080	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	9	0.00	18	8400	9324	1.08	1.11	+.03	
S 4,990	2,500	ARAB BANKING CO.	22.9	0.00	1	200	634	3.03	3.17	+.14	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 232.36		CHNG: -0.10		109		182899 427864		
S 2,100	1,990	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.5	7.65	1	50	98	2.00	1.95	-.05	
S 6,170	3,150	ALMISR AL-ARABI	15.7	0.00	4	892	2944	3.20	3.31	+.11	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 117.30		CHNG: +0.27		5		942 3041		
2,050	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.3	5.21	10	7255	13929	1.92	1.92	-	
4,030	1,320	IRBIO ELECTRICITY	14.9	4.60	1	50	125	2.59	2.50	-.09	
S 3,410	2,450	HIGHER MINERALS	17.0	4.63	1	50	169	3.35	3.37	+.02	
S 7,950	3,750	VEHIC. CHASSIS FED.	9	0.02	8	448	2488	6.14	6.38	+.24	
S 6,100	3,550	ARAB INTL. HOTELS	13.8	4.45	3	600	2572	4.28	4.49	+.21	
S 3,050	2,300	SHIPPING LINES	13.4	5.65	1	1000	2300	2.38	2.30	-.08	
1,550	1,930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	1	550	105	1.05	1.05	-	
1,010	820	REAL ESTATE INV.	12.8	6.52	1	250	230	.97	.92	-.05	
810	470	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	26.7	0.00	9	16850	8837	.55	.52	-.03	
1,680	1,150	MID. EAST HOTELS	19.0	0.00	6	3200	3969	1.24	1.25	+.01	
4,000	2,890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	10.1	0.00	1	250	970	3.84	3.88	+.04	
1,090	900	ZARKA EDUCATION	9	0.00	1	200	190	.95	.95	-	
2,230	1,630	UNIFIED CO.	8.0	6.55	3	750	1260	1.68	1.68	-	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 113.02		CHNG: +0.31		41		31605 37613		
4,450	2,750	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	19.1	3.89	22	18324	51316	2.77	2.83	+.06	
11,160	9,200	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.3	8.35	1	1000	10650	10.50	10.45	-.05	
6,700	4,000	JORDAN TANNING	7.3	5.04	1	100	595	5.95	5.95	-	
1,410	1,040	MOLEN INDUSTRIES	9.3	9.35	1	250	268	1.04	1.07	+.03	
2,950	1,350	INDUSTRIAL CORR. MGR.	9	0.00	2	600	2485	1.42	1.42	-	
7,000	5,800	JOR. WORSTED MILLS	10.9	2.95	17	6100	40398	6.45	6.77	+.32	
4,700	3,440	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	11.5	4.81	7	1887	7823	4.15	4.16	+.01	
2,940	2,200	JORDAN DAIRY	9.5	8.64	1	800	2264	2.83	2.83	-	
3,000	1,800	GENERAL HITING	9	0.00	1	250	512	1.28	1.28	-	
4,000	5,000	ARAB CHEM. DISTR.	21.6	4.26	2	100	704	6.70	7.04	+.34	
1,420	1,050	RAPID INDUSTRIES	9	0.00	1	100	123	1.28	1.23	-.05	
4,650	450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.7	0.00	10	6350	2921	.60	.60	-	
770	510	NATIONAL INDUS.	9	0.00	13	42500	25500	.61	.60	-.01	
1,150	410	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	21	16000	6515	.42	.41	-.01	
4,800	4,370	JOR. CHEM. INDUS.	20.5	3.97	1	250	1260	4.80	5.04	+.24	
840	550	JOR. ROPEWORK INDUS.	9	0.00	1	750	420	.57	.56	-.01	
2,930	1,380	UNIV. CHEM. INDUS.	14.4	6.25	1	250	400	1.52	1.60	+.08	
4,610	2,700	ALADDIN CO.	25.2	2.17	5	1137	3411	3.00	3.00	-	
S 3,000	1,160	NATL. CABLE WIRE-HYAC	30.5	0.00	1	100	127	1.28	1.27	-.01	
S 980	530	JOR. SILICO-CHEN.	9	0.00	5	1500	885	.60	.59	-.01	
1,610	1,160	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	15.1	5.93	4	750	885	1.19	1.18	-.02	
1,800	820	UNIV. MODN. INDUS.	13.5	25	26	55400	49087	.87	.86	-.02	
4,130	690	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	41.9	12.35	3	6800	68402	.79	.82	+.03	
1,620	1,320	NATL. CHLORINE	13.9	4.76	4	1133	1675	1.48	1.47	-.01	
990	810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.5	0.00	10	5900	5310	.90	.90	-	
1,970	1,340	EL -KAY READY WEAR	52.8	0.00	24	10900	15978	1.47	1.50	+.03	
840	570	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.4	16.57	12	6300	3779	.50	.60	+.10	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 114.18		CHNG: +0.52		243		264879 301922		
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 168.15		CHNG: +0.15		398		480325 770441		
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 24/12/1997											
.550	.300	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	9	0.00	2	750	255	.34	.34	-	
.610	.340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9	0.00	18	41650	14993	.35	.36	+.01	
1.550	1.060	SABER INVESTMENT	0.76	0.00	8	8600	10734	1.24	1.24	-	
.800	.660	UNION INV. 501	9	0.00	2	546	113	.71	.71	-	
.570	.360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	32	86000	40105	.50	.47	-.03	
N 720	.700	AL-SHARQ INV. CO.	0	0.00	1	67000	62310	.93	.93	-	
N 2,150	1.050	CENTURY GROUP	0	0.00	1	20000	404000	2.00	2.02	+.02	
.380	.140	JOR. INDUS. MATCH-JENCO	9	0.00	3	931897	100962	.17	.17	-	
.630	.440	ARAB FOOD & MID.	9	0.00	1	900	423	.47	.47	-	
4	.280	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	34.530	0.00	2	725	685	.29	.29	-	
4	.590	.320	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	2	1350	419	.32	.31	-.01
4	.750	.380	NATL. MULT. ENG. AMICO	9	0.00	2	3500	1530	.54	.51	-.03
4	.640	.380	NATL. DYES & DYES	9	0.00	2	1489	380	.55	.55	-
4	.660	.580	MIDEAST PHARM. 752	9	0.00	6	6869	2747	.66	.65	-.01
T 1,450	.860	UNION TOBACCO 752	9	0.00	4	5264	6339	1.45	1.46	+.01	
4	.730	.690	RAII PHARM.	9	0.00	6	75300	52085	.69	.69	-
4	.470	.280	INDS. ENG.	9	0.00	6	786	319	.31	.31	-
4	.830	.570	INDS. CERAMIC	15.7	0.00	1	500	300	.61	.60	-.02
4	.520	.210	1. TEXTILE MANUF.	9	0.00	1	250	100	.27	.28	+.01
4	.820	.490	NATL. ALUMINUM	9	0.00	4	77150	4126	.54	.54	-
N 1,000	.660	NATL. POLYMER. 753	93.2	0.00	1	650	273	.67	.67	-	
N 1,050	.720	ARAB INTL. FOOD FACT.	45.8	0.00	1	3250	3088	.95	.95	-	
GRAND TOTAL					115		1112726		708811		

## Melbourne to host Olympic football matches

MELBOURNE, (AFP) — Football matches at the 2000 Olympics will be played in Melbourne after all following successful negotiations between Sydney 2000 organisers and the Victorian state government, it was announced Wednesday.

Victoria state Premier Jeff Kennett, who a few months ago ruled out any Olympic matches in Australia's second-biggest city, said 12 matches will be played at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Kennett said the MCG was chosen because his government could not be certain that the original venue, the inner-city Docklands stadium, would be constructed on time.

Other football group matches will be played in Adelaide, Canberra, Brisbane and host city Sydney.

Kennett said the opening day of matches in Melbourne would feature double-header

women's and men's matches on September 14, 2000.

He said there would be four other double-headers followed by a quarter-final and a semi-final.

He said he spoke to Australian Football League (AFL) Chief Executive Wayne Jackson Wednesday and was confident that the AFL would agree to move their grand final to September 2 in the Olympic year.

Moving the AFL grand final back a week to September 2 will allow time for the MCG surface to be prepared.

The premier said that the success of the November 29 World Cup qualifier between Iran and Australia at the MCG, which drew an Australian record soccer crowd of 85,000, was the "sealing point" for the decision to play the Olympic qualifying matches there.

## Broncos seek revenge against Jaguars

DENVER, Colorado (AFP) — Before the Denver Broncos can worry about reaching the Super Bowl, they must get past the team that broke their hearts last season — the Jacksonville Jaguars.

That rematch from last year's post-season leads the weekend's start of this year's National Football League playoffs, with 12 clubs vying to reach the Super Bowl in San Diego on January 25.

Jacksonville visit Denver and the New York Giants host Minnesota on Saturday while Detroit meet Tampa Bay and Miami play New England on Sunday. San Francisco, Green Bay, Kansas City and Pittsburgh have byes.

The Jaguars beat Denver 30-17 here last year, a stunner that saw a second-year expansion club that barely made the playoffs topple a club that had a 12-1 record and was favoured to reach the Super Bowl.

"It was such a disappointing loss, I couldn't even stay in town," Denver safety Tyrone Braxton said. "I want to make sure we don't have that sick feeling again."

Jacksonville rallied from a 12-0 deficit, scoring on six consecutive possessions with Mark Brunell's passing and the runs of Natrone Means wearing down Denver's defense.

"Everyone here is looking forward to playing them again," Denver linebacker Bill Romanowski said. "I know I am, because I was terrible."

Denver tight end Shannon Sharpe said it would take until the 21st century before his team got over that defeat. Fans agree.

Despite a 9-1 start this year, fan response was so-so after their confidence was shattered a year ago. A 3-3 finish to lose a first-round bye did nothing to ease fears of another early exit.

The Jaguars could do it again. They have won six of their past eight games. Brunell has thrown for 3,281 yards and 18 touchdowns.

Means has 823 yards and nine touchdowns.

The Giants have a revenge factor as well. They have not reached the playoffs in four seasons, doing so last when they lost in the first round to Minnesota, the same foes they face in this year's first round.

The Vikings began 8-2 but lost five games in a row and barely made the playoffs, needing a last-game win over league doormat Indianapolis in the final game to qualify for the fifth time in six years.

"Everybody says we've been ugly the last five weeks," said linebacker Dixon Edwards. "Now we're starting to look real pretty again."

The Buccaneers play their first home playoff game in 17 years against Detroit and coach Tony Dungy vows they will not be content with their achievement of reaching the playoffs for the first time since 1982.

"All along, we've had higher expectations than just reaching the playoffs," he said. "I know others around here have been caught up in that, but not the team. Now that we're here, we want to do some damage."

Tampa Bay must shut down NFL rushing leader Barry Sanders, whose 2,053 yards this season was the second-greatest total by an NFL rusher in a season.

The Buccaneers kept Sanders to a season-low 20 yards in winning on the road in September. But in Tampa, Sanders rumbled for a season-high 215 yards in a 27-9 Detroit triumph.

The Patriots, Super Bowl losers to Green Bay in January, had to rebuild after losing coach Bill Parcells and several key players to the New York Jets, who went from 1-15 last year to just missing the playoffs.

New England will rely upon the passing of Drew Bledsoe to overcome the Dolphins, who have not won a playoff game since 1994, not reached the Super Bowl since 1985 and not won the NFL crown since 1974.

## Back to work for Whitbread crews

SYDNEY (AFP) — The nine-boat fleet may have only arrived Tuesday and is not due to leave until January 4, but it was back to work for the crews in the Whitbread Round the World Race here on Christmas Eve.

The 2,250-mile third leg of the global yacht epic from Fremantle to Sydney battered the crews and the boats, and several of the yachts were being nursed back into shape in Sydney Harbour Wednesday.

The crews have only 10 days to make repairs before the fourth leg to Auckland and most of the yachts had already taken their masts down to be examined.

"The guys are tired after a hard leg," said New Zealander Grant Dalton, skipper of Monaco's Merit Cup, which finished fourth in the third leg behind overall leader EF Language, Swedish Match and Chessie Racing.

"This is a short stopover with Christmas in the middle, so we have to get everything quickly sorted out."

"The boys are working on the boat today. We'll have Christmas Day and Boxing Day off so we can watch the start of the Sydney to Hobart race (on Boxing Day)."

Swedish Match skipper Gunnar Krantz, whose crew began repairing damage to the base of its mast, said the work was all part of being a professional sailor.

"We are professionals and we are here to race and to do whatever comes with it," said Krantz. "The crew are working this morning but will have the afternoon off for our Christmas party."

Swedes traditionally celebrate Christmas on December 24 and the Swedish Match team made sure that Santa Claus, a large Christmas tree and plenty of gifts were inside the team's quarters during the party which they hosted for the Whitbread racers and their children.

Most of the crews will celebrate Christmas as a group Thursday.

The crew of Norway's Innovation Kvaerner will be treated to an Aussie-style Christmas lunch at the Sydney home of crewman Alby Pratt.

Pratt went overboard in the Bass Strait late Saturday before being plucked from the waters by his crewmates.

## 1997 — The year of the 'big bite'

PARIS (AFP) — Lennox Lewis and Evander Holyfield, victims of some of the most shameful scenes in boxing, restored a measure of credibility to the world heavyweight scene in 1997. But the year will, alas, still best be remembered as the year of the 'big bite'.

Mike Tyson, who had lost his crown to Holyfield seven months earlier, ripped away the already razor-thin veneer of respectability surrounding the sport when he bit off part of his opponent's ear during a rematch in Las Vegas on June 28.

That moment of barbaric madness led to Tyson's disqualification and eventual suspension — the Nevada Athletic Commission revoking the former champion's licence and imposing a \$3 million fine.

It was the least they could do.

Tyson, fighting on the eve of his 31st birthday, claimed later that something had "simply snapped" after he had been head-butted by Holyfield in the second round.

But it is more likely that the world's most feared heavyweight realised that he was again going to lose to the popular preacher from Alabama, and rather than face that humiliation he turned coward and tore up the rule book.

Tyson, who became the youngest man ever to win the world heavyweight crown when he knocked out Canadian Trevor Berbick as a 20-year-old in 1986, bullied and intimidated his way to 45 victories and pocketed an estimated fortune of \$200 million after making his debut back in 1985.

But whereas opponents usually froze in fear at the mere sight of Tyson prowling the ring before the first bell — Holyfield showed in their first fight that he was different. He was willing to stand his ground and match punch for punch.

That was a new experience for Tyson, and although his cornermen and army of hangers-on managed to convince him that his defeat was an accident, he was clearly thrown into panic when he again found he could not bully his way to victory in the rematch.

Unbelievably Tyson got away with a first dreadful bite when he chewed off and spat out part of Holyfield's right ear in the third round.

The savage foul sent his outraged opponent leaping backwards in disbelief, and although referee Mills Lane deducted a massive two points from the challenger, he surprisingly allowed the fight to continue.

But when Holyfield had his left ear bitten in the very next clinch, disqualification was the only option.

Tyson's animal tactics delivered a severe body blow to the already shady heavyweight scene — but more scandal was to follow two weeks later when 2.01metre Henry Akinwande, the undefeated World Boxing Organisation (WBO) champion was also disqualified in his clash with World Boxing Council (WBC) titleholder Lennox Lewis.

Akinwande, offered a one million dollar purse for the all-British title showdown in Lake Tahoe, Nevada, simply refused to fight and after five rounds of persistent holding and negative tactics, the referee finally stopped the pathetic spectacle.

It left the paying public irate. Lewis frustrated and WBC supervisor John



Mike Tyson

Morris angry. "Akinwande's performance was a disgrace," raged Morris after the contest, adding: "After the Mike Tyson affair, boxing needed a fight like this like

stopped the courageous Moorer after eight rounds — leaving the road open for a title-unifying 1998 showdown with Lewis.

Elsewhere in the division big George Foreman finally

Gerrie Coetzee, Iran Barkley, Rene Arrendondo and Carlos Palomino who appeared on a dreadful bill in Hollywood in June.

The 47-year-old Palomino, the WBC welterweight champion back in 1979, stopped Arrendondo in the first round, but Barkley and Coetzee struggled through ten meaningless rounds for something called the World Boxing Board (WBB) super-heavyweight crown — the referee only rarely managing to bring them out of a clinch.

Both Barkley and Coetzee looked as though they hadn't seen the inside of a gym in months, and when the 37-year-old Barkley, who weighed in at a massive 15st 5lbs, finally dispatched the 42-year-old South African in the tenth, it came as a timely deliverance for any boxing fans who had the misfortune to be watching.

Roberto Duran, 46, notched up his 100th career win against 13 defeats in front of his fanatical home fans in Panama City in June when he scored a unanimous points decision over former WBA middleweight champion Jorge Castro of Argentina. Castro had beaten the Panamanian five months earlier.

But after that win Duran looked grossly overworked and far less impressive when he appeared in South Africa in November, despite scoring a unanimous points decision over Britain's Dave Radford.

Julio Cesar Chavez was another former champion trying to turn back the clock. The 35-year-old Mexican, once revered as the world's best pound-for-pound fighter when he reigned as king of the junior-lightweights and lightweights in the late 1980s, plodded to an unconvincing points decision over American Larry La Couriere in July but promised he would be in better shape to face Miguel Angel Gonzalez in February for the vacant WBC light-welterweight crown, in Mexico City.

Terry Norris, 30, missed out on a major pay-day when he threw away his WBC super-welterweight crown after being stopped by Gulf War veteran Keith Mullings after eight rounds in December.

Norris, who became world champion by stopping Sugar Ray Leonard in 1991, looked as though he had things under control but suddenly grew careless and Mullings felled him with a huge right.

Before the defeat Norris had been promised the biggest purse of his career (\$4.5 million) to step down a weight and face American

'golden-boy' Oscar De La Hoya. The loss of his title saw that showdown disappear.

The unbeaten De La Hoya was fighting on the same bill the night Norris got beaten, but unlike his potential rival he made no mistakes and he stopped Puerto Rico's Wilfredo Rivera in eight rounds.

It was the stylish De La Hoya's 27th win and it came at the end of an excellent year in which he also defeated Kenya's David Kamau and fellow-Americans Pernell Whitaker and Camacho.

Roy Jones, 28, was at his awesome best to defeat compatriot Montell Griffin in the first round and reclaim his WBC light-heavyweight crown in August. Jones, from Florida, had lost the title in March when he was disqualified after clipping Griffin with a couple of punches while the challenger was down on one knee.

Jones, who has a remarkable record and who has beaten seven world champions on his way to winning world crowns at three different weights, is still looking to command the same sort of respect and box office as De La Hoya and a possible opponent in 1998 may be experienced south-paw Michael Nunn.

The 34-year-old Nunn, a former IBF middleweight and WBA super-middleweight champion with only three defeats in 56 contests demonstrated that he is still very much a force to be reckoned with when he boxed the ears off fellow-American Booker Word for a seventh round victory in May.

Germany's Polish-born Dariusz Michalczewski added the WBA and IBF light-heavyweight titles to his WBO crown in June when he scored a unanimous points win over American Virgil Hill — but gave the new crowns back a few weeks later to concentrate on his WBO commitments.

And IBF welterweight champion Felix Trinidad of Puerto Rico showed he could still punch his way to victory in the higher division. In August he dispatched Australian Troy Waters in the first round of their final eliminator for a WBC light-middleweight title.

Britain's flashy Naseem Hamed, the WBO featherweight king, continued to perfect and draw out his dramatic and acrobatic entries into the ring — which was just as well since opponents rarely lasted long against his power.

In December he finally got a chance to impress the American market and got up from three knockdowns to stop home challenger Kevin Kelley in the fourth round. "I wanted to cause as much excitement as possible," bragged Hamed, referring to his visits to the canvas.

"But I proved myself and I am still champion of the world."

New York-based Julio Cesar Green of the Dominican Republic produced one of the year's biggest upsets when he took the WBA middleweight title after outpointing hot favourite William Joppy, from Maryland and previously unbeaten in 26 fights, complained he had been "robbed."

"My job was good enough to win the fight," he said. "It was all he could offer. He had broken his right hand early in the contest."

## 1997 BOXING REVIEW

a hole in the head."

The fight was a recurring nightmare for Lewis.

The 31-year-old British champion had recaptured the WBC crown in Las Vegas the previous February in a similarly bizarre clash against the only man ever to beat him — Oliver McCall.

McCall, a drug addict who reigned briefly as champion after scoring a shock second-round stoppage over Lewis in 1994, suffered what appeared to be a nervous breakdown in the return by bursting into tears and refusing to defend himself in the fifth round.

He was led back to his corner by the referee and, after one of the strangest press conferences ever held, disappeared from public view. It was later revealed that he was in a mental hospital.

Little wonder the heavyweight division was in disarray.

Fortunately, however, two superb late-year performances — fittingly featuring Lewis and Holyfield — restored some faith in the sport.

After his two 'non-fights', Lewis risked everything by staking his title against the highly dangerous Andrew Golota.

The big 29-year old Pole, who had won 28 fights before twice being disqualified for low blows against Riddick Bowe in 1996, was explosive, capable and tough.

Lewis, however, took just 95 seconds to end Golota's hopes. He sent his opponent reeling after a first barrage of superbly-timed punches, and although Golota beat the count, Lewis finished off the job with such clinical precision that he at last aroused the interest of the vast American market which had previously snubbed him.

One month later, Holyfield climbed through the ropes in Las Vegas and faced fellow-American and International Boxing Federation (IBF) champion Michael Moorer — an awkward southpaw who had taken away his titles with a points victory in 1994.

And this time the crowd got their money's worth. Both boxers gave everything they had and put on a skillful, exciting and irreproachable show. Holyfield eventually

bowed out.

The 49-year-old, who first reigned as world champion when he stopped Joe Frazier back in 1973 and then came out of retirement to win the title again 22 years later by knocking out Moorer, was controversially outpointed by undefeated fellow-American Shannon Briggs.

But Foreman took the loss on the chin, refused to argue the decision and wished his opponent well.

"I've got four boys at home and I don't intend to let them hear me crying about a loss," he said, after announcing he had at last come to the end of the road. "I'm just proud of myself for showing the world that the age of 50 is not a death sentence for an athlete. You can pursue excellence for as long as you like — not for as long as people say you can."

There was no shortage of other 'senior citizens' climbing through the ropes.

Larry Holmes, another former world heavyweight champion, was still fighting at 47. He collected half a million dollars in Copenhagen but lost a split decision to unbeaten Brian Nielsen in a bid to take the Danish fighter's Boxing Organisation (IBO) crown.

Sugar Ray Leonard, two months short of his 41st birthday, tried to complete the same kind of miracle he achieved against Marvin Hagler a decade earlier and came out to fight Hector 'Macho' Camacho in Atlantic City in March. But he was humiliated in five rounds by a hardly impressive opponent.

Leonard, the 1976 Olympic champion who pocketed four million dollars for the Camacho bout, claimed later he had been hindered by a calf injury. But the simple truth was that Leonard, with only seven contests in fifteen years, should never have been allowed to climb into the ring.

The legendary winner of five world titles at five different weights was defiant, however, announcing: "I'm not retiring. I will fight again. I can still put on a show. I just need to go through a series of tune-ups."

Let's hope he will have second thoughts before joining the ranks of other ageing journeymen such as

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# Sports

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## Despite 3 Grand Slams, Hingis misses a golden chance

PARIS (AFP) — With three Grand Slam singles titles, nine other tournament wins and only six defeats in 79 matches — 1997 was indisputably Martina Hingis's year.

But with Steffi Graf out of action for most of the season, Monica Seles in sharp decline and teenage rivals Venus and Serena Williams hovering in the wings and likely to cause upsets in 1998, the record-breaking Swiss teenager may yet live to bitterly regret the last 12 months.

For she may never again have such a great chance of winning all four of the major tournaments in the same year and become only the fourth player in history to achieve the elusive 'Grand Slam.'

Maureen Connolly (1953), Margaret Court (1970) and Steffi Graf (1988), are the only players to have achieved the feat.

Hingis got three-quarters of the way there. The stumbling block proved to be the French Open where she crashed to a shock straight-sets defeat against Croatia's Iva Majoli in the final.

Hingis, named after the legendary Martina Navratilova by her fanatical tennis-playing mother and coach Melanie Molitor, started rewriting the history books in January when, at the age of just 16 years 3 months and 26 days, she became the youngest winner of a Grand Slam singles title this century by triumphing over French number-one Mary Pierce at the Australian Open.

Two months later the young Swiss player became the world's youngest-ever player to top the rankings, and by the time she arrived at Roland Garros she had won six tournaments and was unbeaten in 34 matches.

In the run-up to the world's most gruelling event, however, Hingis suffered the first major injury of her career when she damaged knee ligaments. But the setback did not come from playing tennis but from her other great love — horseriding.

She was thrown while riding a friend's horse and was grounded for three weeks — an enforced rest which did not allow her to prepare properly for the French Open.

Despite the mishap Hingis looked to be on her way to another triumph when she won a tumultuous three-set showdown with three-times former champion Seles in the semi-finals.

After that win, most observers thought she had only to turn up to claim the trophy. Hingis, however, was brought back to earth when she found a highly combative 19-year-old Majoli waiting for her. The Croatian then played the match of her life and dismissed Hingis in 78 minutes.

Hingis bravely smiled off the defeat, crossed the English Channel and won the Wimbledon title by beating experienced Czech serve-and-volley specialist Jana Novotna before sweeping through the draw at the U.S. Open without dropping a set to take the title after a one-sided win over home hope Venus Williams.

The Swiss player, a hot favourite to close her season by winning the WTA Championships, slipped in New York, however, when she went down in the semi-finals — Pierce avenging her loss in Australia.

Steffi Graf had a disastrous season. Having withdrawn because of continuing problems with her knee from a scheduled showdown with Hingis in the final in Tokyo in February, the German champion returned to the tour in May



World No. 1 Martina Hingis

only to crash to one of the worst defeats of her career third round in Berlin. Although the German

### 1997 TENNIS REVIEW



Steffi Graf

— 0-6, 1-6 — when she faced South Africa's Amanda Coetzer in the

15-year-old Mirjana Lucic for the title in Strasbourg, she slumped to another defeat against the 5ft 2in (1.57m) Coetzer in the quarter-finals at the French Open.

It was the end of Graf's season.

A few days after leaving Roland Garros she finally underwent the operation on the knee she had been putting off for months.

With Graf gone and Seles still far below peak physical condition and clearly suffering from the absence of her father and coach Karoly Seles, who had to stay behind in the United States for stomach cancer treatment, Hingis ruled supreme.

Venus Williams, a hard-hitting 17-year-old six-footer, came over to Europe in the summer accompanied by her mother and younger sister Serena — and showed enough to leave nobody in any doubt that she could develop into a major threat to Hingis in 1998.

Hingis will also have to deal with sister Serena, considered by many an even brighter prospect than Venus.

Serena exploded on the scene in Chicago where, as a wild-card entry, she defeated Elena Likhovtseva, Mary Pierce and Monica Seles to go rocketing up to 102nd in the rankings.

Anna Kournikova, the ambitious Russian newcomer with a lethal double-fisted backhand and model good looks, swept into the semi-finals at Wimbledon less than one month after her 16th birthday. For the Championship fortnight, one of the wettest-ever, the young Russian, who is coached by Nick Bollettieri, was the main target of the British tabloid press photographers. She played that role to perfection.

The 29-year-old Novotna, followed her runners-up berth at Wimbledon by finally winning the first major title of her career when she finally strung together a series of excellent results and triumphed over Pierce to claim the WTA Championship crown.

The 22-year-old Canadian-born French No. 1 had every reason to be pleased with her season, however.

Quite apart from her excellent performances in Australia and in New York, she was also a member of the first French team ever to win the Fed Cup.

Under Yannick Noah, Pierce joined up with Nathalie Tauziat, Sandrine Testud and Alexandra Fusai to beat the Netherlands 4-1 in the final.

## Bulls' Phil Jackson reaches 500-victory mark

CHICAGO (AP) — Phil Jackson reached the 500-victory mark faster than any coach in NBA history as his Chicago Bulls got 27 points from Michael Jordan and a season-high 25 rebounds from Dennis Rodman to defeat the Los Angeles Clippers 94-89 Tuesday night.

Jackson got No. 500 in his 682nd game — one earlier than Pat Riley accomplished the feat.

Rodney Rogers scored 20 points and Derrick Martin 19 for the Clippers, who led for most of the night before losing for the seventh time in eight games.

Spurs 91, Pacers 79: At San Antonio, David Robinson scored a season-high 39 points to lead San Antonio over Indiana as the Spurs snapped the Pacers' six-game winning streak.

The Spurs won their sixth straight as Robinson and Tim Duncan dominated inside. Duncan added 18 points and 17 rebounds and Robinson pulled down 12 boards.

Indiana, which had its six-game winning streak

snapped, was led by Reggie Miller with 25 points. Rick Smith added 14.

Celtics 102, Hornets 96: At Boston, Ron Mercer had career-highs of 28 points and eight rebounds as Boston's bench made up for Antoine Walker's poor shooting and led the Celtics their fourth consecutive win.

Walker, who led the Celtics in scoring in 19 of their first 24 games, shot just 3-of-21. But Dana Barros pitched in with 18 points and even Greg Minor — the last player on the Celtics' bench — scored four consecutive points in an 11-2 run that essentially decided the game.

Glen Rice had 23 points and Bobby Phillips added a season-high 22 for the Hornets.

Cavaliers 99, Mavericks 85: At Cleveland, rookies Derek Anderson, Cedric Henderson and Brevin Knight had strong games and Cleveland outscored Dallas 32-8 in the third quarter.

Anderson scored a season-high 24 points, Hender-

son had a season-high 20 and Knight had 14 points and 15 assists for the Cavs, who sent the Mavericks to their 10th consecutive loss.

Michael Finley scored 29 for Dallas, which used an 18-7 run at the start of the fourth quarter to pull to 80-75. A steal and 15-foot jumper by Wesley Person helped Cleveland regain command.

Timberwolves 112, Supersonics 103: At Seattle, Stephon Marbury scored 35 points, including eight 3-pointers, and Minnesota broke a record 26-game losing streak to Seattle.

Seattle's 26-game winning streak against the Timberwolves over six seasons was an NBA record by one team against another.

Gary Payton, one of the NBA's top defensive guards, was on Marbury much of the game but couldn't stop him. Marbury made 13 of 19 shots from the field.

Trail Blazers 93, Kings 82: At Portland, Oregon, Arvydas Sabonis had 19 points and 12 rebounds as

Portland dominated inside for a victory over Sacramento.

Brian Grant added 17 points and 12 rebounds against his former team, and Kenny Anderson also scored 17. The Blazers out rebounded the Kings 62-40, including 19 offensive boards.

The Kings were led by Mitch Richmond's 30 points. Williamson and Billy Owens each scored 18.

Warriors 87, Nuggets 75: At Oakland, California, Donyell Marshall scored 20 points, including five during a decisive 15-0 surge, and Golden State held Denver to seven fourth-quarter points.

The seven points were a franchise low for a quarter, the Nuggets' previous low was eight points in the second quarter against Detroit on Dec. 9.

The win was Golden State's fifth straight at home, all of them coming since the Dec. 3 departure of Latrell Sprewell after his attack on coach P.J. Carlesimo.

## Holyfield says Lewis fight is 'close'

HOUSTON (AFP) — Evander Holyfield says he is on the verge of signing a deal to fight Britain's Lennox Lewis in a heavy-weight world title unification fight next year.

"It's close, it's close — this could be the biggest fight in '98," IBF and WBA champion Holyfield said in a television interview here late Monday.

Lewis' promoter Panos Eliades said earlier Monday that WBC champion Lewis had signed a deal to meet Holyfield in a 33 million pound (\$50 million) unification fight in Las Vegas on April 25.

The deal, said to have been completed at Don King's Florida home at the weekend, depended on Holyfield agreeing to a guaranteed purse of around \$30 million.

Eliades said: "We've agreed terms and we've entered into a contract. Now Don King has to agree with Holyfield to accept the balance available. Hopefully by the end of the week we should know."



Stephane Guivarc'h of Auxerre (R) leads a pack of his teammates in a nordic skiing exercise in Tignes December 23. Players from the French national soccer team are staying at the ski resort until December 27 for winter training ahead of next year's World Cup finals (Reuters photo)

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## Israel rules out security deal with crackdown on Jewish militants

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will reject any security accord with the Palestinians which imposes commitments on Israel to crack down on Jewish militants, a senior official said Wednesday.

Mr. Netanyahu refused this week to sign a draft accord reached by his security chiefs with Palestinian officials and brokered by the United States which would commit both Israel and the Palestinians to suppress militants, officials said.

A senior Israeli official, who asked not to be named, insisted that it was "unacceptable" to include in the accord commitments for Israel to take action against Jewish extremists.

"The obligations are for the Palestinian Authority to attack terrorism. We are talking about their commitments. It has nothing to do with what we do and have been doing" against Jewish militants, he told AFP.

He said there was "no equivalence" between Jewish extremists and Palestinian groups such as the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), calling attempts to draw a parallel "obnoxious and completely irrelevant and bogus."

He also said the steps against Palestinian activists detailed in the accord were "not enough," since it would not force the authority to extradite to Israel Palestinians involved in the killing of Israelis, a demand which the Palestinians have long rejected.

The security accord is a cen-

tral plank of a package deal sought by the U.S. under which the Palestinians would agree to take specific steps in a crackdown against armed activists in return for Israeli implementation of a promised troop withdrawal in the West Bank.

Mr. Netanyahu's objection to the deal is expected to be high on the agenda for a visit starting Jan. 5 by U.S. envoy Dennis Ross, sent to arrange meetings later that month between Mr. Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat with President Bill Clinton in Washington.

Under the draft security accord, both sides would promise to act against "violence or terrorism, regardless of whether it was perpetrated by Israelis or by Palestinians," according to a copy of the draft published by the Israeli daily Yediot Aharonot on Wednesday.

The 16-point draft specifically commits the Israeli government "to confiscate weapons from Israeli citizens who are planning, openly supporting or are involved in acts of terrorism."

In turn, it commits the Palestinian National Authority to "arrest people involved in acts of terrorism," confiscate illegal weapons, infiltrate and pursue underground military groups and exchange security intelligence with Israel.

The accord would also prevent both sides from releasing "suspected terrorists" without first allowing the other to provide "information so as to reconsider the release."

That clause addresses Israeli accusations that the Palestinians quickly release

activists after arresting them, but could also apply to Palestinian complaints that Israel releases Jews who have killed Palestinians.

Mr. Netanyahu cancelled a meeting Monday night during which Israeli and Palestinian officials were to sign the draft, which had already been accepted by President Arafat's cabinet.

He then accused his own negotiators of approving the accord without his go-ahead, Israeli officials said. Security officials shot back that Mr. Netanyahu had "cynically exploited" them over the deal.

A high-ranking military official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Israeli TV the negotiators had briefed Mr. Netanyahu on the draft before his Dec. 18 meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Mr. Netanyahu raised no objections at that time — apparently to avoid riling Ms. Albright, who is pushing the deal — and afterwards surprised his negotiators by backing down on the agreement, the official said.

"The agreement itself is good," said former military negotiator Oren Shohar, now a member of the opposition Labour Party, pointing to the fact that Israel already takes steps against Jewish militants under its own law.

Meanwhile, a source close to Mr. Netanyahu's hardline Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon said Mr. Sharon was directly involved in negotiating the security accord. Mr. Sharon has made no criticism of the deal, nor commented on Mr. Netanyahu's refusal to sign on, the source said.



WHERE IS RUDOLPH? Santa and his elf both of Steamboat Springs, take their snowboards to the skies to get a head start on Christmas at the Steamboat Ski Area in Steamboat Springs, Colo., Tuesday (AP photo)

## Russia calls for early lifting of U.N. sanctions on Iraq

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's foreign minister Tuesday again called on the United Nations to speed up its inspections of Iraq's military arsenals so that sanctions could be lifted as soon as possible.

"The U.N. Special Commission must work to ensure the earliest lifting of the sanctions, and not turn it into some kind of an amorphous, distant goal," Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov told a news conference.

Mr. Primakov's comments highlighted the rift between the U.S. and Russia over how to deal with Iraq.

The Americans say that as long as Iraq refuses to allow inspectors into presidential sites, the U.N. team will not be able to complete its work and there's no prospect of lifting the sanctions.

Russia, meanwhile, would like to see the sanctions lifted so that Iraq can pay billions of dollars it owes Moscow from weapons purchases in the 1980s. Russia already has signed huge deals to rebuild Iraq's oil industry pending the removal of sanctions.

Mr. Primakov, a Middle East expert, helped end a recent U.N. standoff with Iraq when he persuaded Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to re-admit U.N. weapons inspectors.

"We have achieved major progress by easing tension over Iraq," Mr. Primakov said.

Though the inspectors have returned, President Hussein's government has still refused to let them check some 40-odd presidential palaces and homes for materials and documents related to Iraq's weapons programmes.

"The crisis still exists, I wouldn't try to smooth it over," Mr. Primakov added. Mr. Primakov didn't address the issue of weapons inspectors visiting presidential sites in Iraq. But he reasserted Russia's objection to using military force against the Arab Nation.

"We are strongly against the use of force against Iraq," Mr. Primakov said.

The U.N. Security Council Monday approved a statement criticising, but not condemning Iraq for refusing to allow the search of all suspected sites. Russia, along with France and China, worked to soften the original U.S. version which included stronger language.

When asked about the stalled Israeli-Arab peace process, Primakov sounded pessimistic.

"We don't grieve too much about not being involved in the current stage of talks between [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu and [Palestinian President Yasser] Arafat, as we don't want to share in a failure," he said.

## Iraqis protest at Iranian embassy over blocking of Russian aid plane

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Hundreds of schoolchildren demonstrated outside the Iranian embassy here Wednesday to protest against Tehran's decision to stop a Russian airliner from flying to Baghdad in defiance of U.N. sanctions.

Tehran stopped the aircraft sent by Russian ultranationalist MP Vladimir Zhirinovskiy from entering Iraqi airspace Monday.

An aide to Mr. Zhirinovskiy said the plane was carrying food and medicines, as well as about 20 Russian businessmen and MPs from his far-right Liberal Democratic Party.

"Iraqi schoolchildren demand that the Russian peace plane be allowed to land in Baghdad despite the embargo," read a banner carried by the demonstrators who shouted slogans backing Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

"Iran's decision is a signal to America and it is unacceptable coming from a neighbouring Islamic state," said Nizar Tufic Al Ezzi, an official with the ruling Baath party who joined

the protest.

No Iranian diplomat was prepared to meet the demonstrators to receive a letter prepared for the leadership in Tehran.

"Any use of air routes to Iraq is dependent on U.N. authorisation," the Iranian foreign ministry said Tuesday.

The cargo of the plane, which landed in the western Iranian city of Kermanshah, could still be taken on to Iraq by land, it said.

Since 1990 only U.N. aircraft and a few transport planes carrying food and medicine have been allowed to fly to Iraq. An aircraft carrying medicines and Christmas presents from the Icelandic humanitarian organisation Peace 2000, is expected in Baghdad Thursday, after organisers gained U.N. approval.

Mr. Zhirinovskiy has strongly criticised the sanctions imposed on Iraq following its 1990 invasion of Kuwait during a number of visits to Iraq. He met President Hussein during a trip to Baghdad earlier this month.

## Khamenei says U.S. government controlled by Zionists

TEHRAN (AP) — Iran's spiritual leader on Wednesday criticised the U.S. government as controlled by Zionists, speaking just 10 days after the Iranian president praised the Americans and urged a dialogue with them.

The comments by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's top authority, and President Mohammad

Khatami are part of a power struggle between Iran's moderates and hard-liners over whether to improve ties with the United States after nearly two decades of hostility.

"Unfortunately, today the U.S. government and Congress are under the spell of the Zionists in the political, cultural and financial spheres," the state-run

radio quoted Ayatollah Khamenei as saying in a speech to senior clerics in Tehran.

"The Zionist regime [Israel] is only part of the Zionist network that is controlled by capitalists in some countries around the world, including the United States," said Ayatollah Khamenei. "The Zionists dominate U.S. politics."

Earlier this month, President Khatami said he wanted to open a dialogue with the American people.

"I take this opportunity to pay my respects to the great American people, and hope to have a dialogue with the American people and about the United States in the not too distant future," he said at a news conference.

## Mubarak says Palestinian state a necessity to avoid violence

CAIRO (AP) — A Palestinian state must be established "sooner or later" for peace to take hold in the region, President Hosni Mubarak was quoted as saying by Egypt's Middle East News Agency (MENA) on Wednesday.

President Mubarak also accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of reneging on already-signed peace accords between the Palestinians and Israel.

"He [Mr. Netanyahu] has already cancelled all the [preceding] agreements, and what he is doing and proposing now... proves this," Mr. Mubarak told the Lebanese magazine Al Hawadith, the text of which was carried by MENA.

Egypt and other Arab states have criticised Mr. Netanyahu for ignoring the land-for-peace basis of peace agreements. Last Friday, the Israeli premier said that the West Bank, which the Palestinians want to include in their state, is part of Israel.

In the interview, Mr. Mubarak warned that "a

Palestinian state will be established sooner or later, or there will be no peace in the region."

"The alternative is... terrorism and violence everywhere," said President Mubarak, who was in southern Egypt on Wednesday, surveying progress on the New Delta, a massive agricultural and irrigation project intended to move Egyptians from the crowded strip along the Nile River in the future.

Mr. Mubarak also dismissed media reports that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's health was deteriorating, saying that these reports were started by those seeking to "create confusion in the Palestinian ranks."

"It is not in the interests of the peace process to raise rumours about Arafat's health," he said in the interview.

Questioned about Islamist activists, Mr. Mubarak reiterated that there will be no dialogue with movements like Gamaa Islamiya (the Islamic Group) which claimed responsibility for

the Nov. 17 attack in the southern city of Luxor that killed 58 tourists.

While Egyptian officials have repeatedly stated they will not negotiate with terrorists, some Gamaa leaders in exile allege they have had contacts with officials.

Yasser Sirri, who was tried in absentia for the attempted assassination of former Prime Minister Atef Sedki, was quoted in Wednesday's edition of the London-based daily Al Hayat as saying he had contacts with a middleman "close to the government."

Mr. Sirri, who heads the London-based Islamic Information Centre, also has come under attack by Gamaa leaders imprisoned in Egypt, who maintain he does not speak for the group.

The Luxor attack was the largest operation by Gamaa Islamiya since it began a campaign to topple Egypt's secular government and establish Islamist rule. More than 1,200 have been killed — mostly armed activists and police — since the violence began in 1992.

## Nazareth competing with Bethlehem for pilgrims' hearts in 2000

By Dina Kraft  
The Associated Press

NAZARETH — The city of Nazareth, where the Bible says Jesus was raised, is gearing up for a millennial rivalry with Palestinian-run Bethlehem over the hearts and pocketbooks of millions of pilgrims.

Both cities have recently

begun a publicity blitz that will grow increasingly intense as 2000 approaches, and are raising millions of dollars for much-needed face lifts.

For Israel, Nazareth has gained new prominence since Bethlehem became autonomous two years ago. With the Holy City of Jerusalem under dispute,

this Israeli-Arab town, with about 35 churches and monasteries, is Israel's main undisputed Christian tourist attraction.

Nazareth's Christian credentials will be economically significant in 2000, when up to 5 million tourists, mostly pilgrims, are expected — up from the normal 2 million per year.

Bethlehem is more geographically central and enjoys a somewhat higher profile in Western song and lore, but Nazareth officials gathered at a millennium party Monday said they are optimistic that history is on their side.

"Nazareth is the place Jesus spent most of his life," said Deputy Mayor Subail Diad. "Jesus was only born in Bethlehem, and he died in Jerusalem. Between those times he was always in Nazareth."

The two cities have much in common: both are hilly, and Nazareth, with 60,000 people, is only slightly larger. While less than one-tenth of Palestinians are Christian, both cities have a considerable Christian minority — in Nazareth about 40 per cent, in Bethlehem, about one-quarter.

But Bethlehem is in the West Bank, which Israel occupied in 1967. It became autonomous in 1995, and it will almost certainly be part of the Palestinian "entity" to emerge in a future final peace settlement.

Nazareth, about 130 kilometres north, is in land Israel captured during its 1948-49 war of independence, which created borders widely accepted now in the Arab World.

So whereas Bethlehem's population is Palestinian, the people of Nazareth are

"Israeli Arabs," part of a minority that accounts for almost one-fifth of Israel's population of 6 million.

"Nazareth is in Israel and will stay in Israel," said Tareq Shihada, the city's tourism director.

Mr. Shihada said Nazareth plans some \$250 million in improvements by 2000, and about one-third of the sum had already been raised from the Israeli government.

The focus is on increasing the number of hotel rooms in the city from 600 to 2,000. As part of that, buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries will be converted into bed-and-breakfast inns, he said.

Other projects include adding roads, improving the sewage system, creating a sound-and-light show on the history of Nazareth, renovating the old city and central market, and building a

one-kilometre pathway from downtown to a hilltop church on a site Jesus is believed to have frequented as a boy.

On Monday, the city launched the "Jubilleum," cultural and religious events promoting peace and coexistence over the next two years at various sites around the world and funded by three unidentified businessmen, an Israeli, a European and an American.

Nazarenes in biblical robes roamed the hotel lobby where the ceremony was held, handing out hors-d'oeuvres.

It was a prime occasion for Nazareth hype. Mayor Ramiz Jaraisy, who addressed Israeli and foreign dignitaries, said, "Nazareth is one of the most important cities in the whole world. It's the hometown of Jesus. He is called Jesus of

Nazareth, not Jesus of any other city."

Bethlehem also has high hopes for a successful celebration. Last Thursday, the city launched "Bethlehem 2000" campaign. Palestinian Cabinet Minister Hanan Ashrawi predicted the town of Jesus' birth "will become the hometown of the human community" in the millennial year.

Bethlehem hopes to spend almost as much as Nazareth — \$180 million — on adding hotel rooms, renovating Manger Square and improving infrastructure.

But unlike its northern rival, it cannot depend on much state support from the impoverished Palestinian National Authority. About one-third of the sum has been pledged by the World Bank and other world donors, and the rest is still being sought.



### Alcoholic mice blamed for missing alcohol

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Indian police have blamed "addicted" mice and rats after thousands of dollars of seized liquor disappeared from their stores, a newspaper reported. The Statesman, quoting police officers, said rodents had acquired a taste for the contraband liquor and had attacked their storehouses across the capital. "In some cases, the addiction has reached an extreme," one officer said. "If they do not get the liquor they become very violent and bite whatever comes their way." One officer did admit that their story was hard to swallow. "If we tell the judge that rats have... consumed the liquor, he is not going to believe it," he said.

### Castro returning to Christ

SAN JOSE (AFP) — The Archbishop of San Jose claimed Monday that Cuban President Fidel Castro — who will meet Pope John Paul II next month — was returning to the Catholicism of his youth. "There comes a time... especially when people feel that the end is near, that they remember what their mothers and their schools taught them," Archbishop Roman Arrieta told the Al Dia newspaper. Pope John Paul II will make his first visit to Cuba Jan. 21-25. When he celebrates Mass in Havana's Revolution Plaza, he will be flanked on one side by the towering silhouette of revolutionary hero Ernesto "Che" Guevara and by a statue of national independence hero Jose Marti on the other.

### Keanu Reeves sinks into spiritualism

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Sinking into his own spiritualism, actor Keanu Reeves says it was mostly his experience working on the film "Little Buddha" which helped him find personal peace. "I didn't need to study Buddhism or turn to it, but it helped me with the role," Reeves says. His co-star in that movie, Chris Isaak, was very interested in the religion. "Chris Isaak was a very funny man when it came to that," Reeves says. "I think Buddhism kind of freaked him out. He's from the Church of Reality and very pragmatic."

### 'Royal Exposure' board game withdrawn

LONDON (AFP) — Royal Exposure, a game of snakes and ladders leading players to the British throne by hopping from one royal scandal to another, was taken off the market Wednesday for fear of angering the public since Princess Diana's death. "It was only meant to be a bit of fun, but I quite understand that it could be seen as bad taste because of what has happened," said Stephen Dunne, head of Chaos Games. The game included cards such as "you have the tastiest toes of the year," referring to 1992 tabloid pictures showing Sarah Ferguson, the Duchess of York, having her toes sucked by her fashion advisor, John Bryan.

### Thou shalt not journey against the traffic, sister

EVRY (AFP) — A 74-year-old nun driving the wrong way down a street in this town just outside Paris injured herself and an oncoming driver Monday, hospital staff said. The sister, who was not identified, broke her leg and fractured a wrist. The driver of the car she hit was only slightly injured.

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